MARVEL MASTERWORKS®

THE MIGHTY THOR®

VOLUME 11

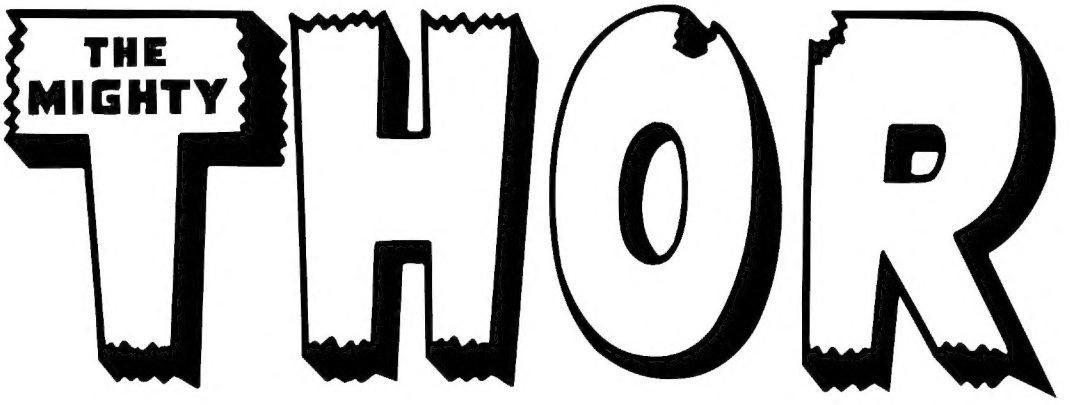
THE MIGHTY THOR Nos. 195-205

GERRY CONWAY & JOHN BUSCEMA

MARVEL

MARVEL MASTERWORKS

PRESENTS



VOLUME 11

COLLECTING

THE MIGHTY THOR Nos. 195-205

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NOS. 195-205

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MARVEL MASTERWORKS
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INTRODUCTION
BY GERRY CONWAY

Something I struggle with, writing these introductions to the *Marvel Masterworks* collections of stories I collaborated on, is how to deal with time and distance.

From one point of view, these stories were written forty years ago, and represent, for most readers, voices and images as distant and mythic and as buried in history as the Norse gods whose legends we pretended to tell.

From another point of view, one that happens to represent my own, these tales were written in the very early days of what we jokingly called—at the time—the Marvel Age of Comics.

When I took over the scripting of *The Mighty Thor* from the Man himself, Stan Lee, Thor as a comic book character was barely ten years old. (He was introduced by Stan, Larry Lieber and Jack Kirby in *Journey Into Mystery* #83 in 1962; my work on the character began with *The Mighty Thor* #193, continuing a story begun by Stan.) In a very real sense he was still a new character whose legend was being developed, and I like to think I contributed to that legend during my nearly four-year run on the title.

(Whether that contribution was for better or worse, of course, is for others to decide.)

Thor has always been one of my favorite Marvel characters, even in the days when he was the thirteen-page lead feature in *Journey Into Mystery*. But, for me, Thor as a character with a unique identity in the Marvel Universe really came into his own when Stan and Jack began the "Tales of Asgard" feature in *Journey Into Mystery* #100, beginning with the four-part "Boyhood of Thor."

This series was when the idea of Thor as the embodiment of an actual Norse god truly took hold for me as a reader. In a masterstroke, Stan and Jack brought Asgard itself into the Marvel Universe as a continuing presence, not just as a kind of *deus ex machina* to be pulled into a story as necessary for added suspense or complication. By giving us insight into Thor's identity as a mythological god separate from his identity as a contemporary "super hero," Lee and Kirby enriched the character immeasurably. As a reader I've always felt that this period—from about *Journey Into Mystery* #100, through about *The Mighty Thor* #145 (continuing the numbering from *JIM*) was the Golden Age of the God of Thunder.

(Some say the Golden Age of anything is thirteen. In other words, when you're thirteen years old and you encounter something for the first time—a book, a movie, a song, a TV show, a writer, an artist—for you, that's the Golden Age. Oddly enough, *Journey Into Mystery* #100 came out around the time I turned thirteen. Coincidence? Probably not.)

Where was I?

Oh, right. Thor, the God of Thunder, one of my favorite Marvel characters.

Also the first top tier Marvel character I was given to write on a fulltime basis.

Intimidating?

You bet.

Unbelievably exciting?

Oh yeah.

***

I was seventeen years old and still in high school when I started writing for Marvel Comics in 1970.

I wasn't exactly a newcomer—I started selling stories to DC Comics when I was sixteen, in 1968—but I was still a kid by any standard except the one teenagers use to tell adults they're all grown up. By the time I took over the scripting of Thor from Stan in 1971, I was almost nineteen, which in my fevered adolescent imagination meant I was practically an old pro.

Needless to say, I was hopelessly (and I hope endearingly) deluded.

The truth, of course, is that when I started writing Thor I was still at the beginning of my career, with a lot left to learn. (I still have a lot left to learn, and I've been doing this now for forty-four years.) What I lacked in knowledge and experience, however, I more than made up for in naiveté and enthusiasm.

Thank the (Norse) gods, then, that I had the good fortune to be teamed with one of the consummate professionals who ever worked in the field of comics: Big John Buscema.

I have no idea what Big John thought about the enthusiastic kid he was partnered with to create the adventures of the God of Thunder. We weren't close on a personal level—how could we be? We were from different generations, with different world-views and sets of experiences, holding different perspectives and living very different lives. I was at the beginning of my career in comics; John was well-established. I was a teenager; John was old enough, literally, to be my father. I had long hair and sideburns; he had a neat trim and a beard. When I started talking I couldn't shut up; John was a man of very few words, most of them mild and well-chosen.

Somehow, though, we managed to work together (on both *Thor*, and, later, *Fantastic Four*) for four years.

I don't know if John had fun, but I sure did.

Working with John taught me a great deal. When I tried to set the pace for a story, either by writing a detailed page-breakdown or, once or twice, a full script, it was almost never as well-paced as the stories John broke down from a more general plot. Where my dialog was sometimes (well, more than sometimes) excessively digressive and overly flowery, John's suggested dialog (on the outside margins of the art) was usually direct and to the point. And no matter how big I wanted to go in terms of scope or drama, John always managed to make things larger and more dramatic.

There's a reason we called him Big John, and it wasn't just because he was a big man.

Like Jack Kirby before him, John thought big as an artist, but where Jack's imagination was without bounds, John always anchored his in a very physical sense of reality. His figurework was superb; his layouts and storytelling were efficient and expansive; and his world-building was as solid as the ground under our feet.

Jack's Thor was a god, aloof and above mere humankind; John's Thor was a god who was also a man, as burdened by emotion as any of us.

Which brings us to the one thing John and I did have in common, and which may have affected our approach to the God of Thunder, unconsciously. We were both raised Catholic, and as such, we were steeped in the religious symbolism of Christian martyrdom. I wouldn't presume to speak for John, but I'm sure that upbringing influenced the way I conceived Thor's dramatic struggle to balance his godhood and his humanity.

When I look at John's version of Thor, I see a god-man full of human passion and feeling, a physical god in a physical world. When he laughs, he laughs hugely and with human delight; when he's tormented, he's tormented with human anguish.

When he loves, he loves as a human loves.

It's all there in the art, and it's all John.

Working with John was more than a joy, it was an honor and a privilege.

***

Even though I started scripting *The Mighty Thor* with issue #193, I consider that my run on the title really begins with the first story of the present volume, issue #195, "In the Shadow of Mangog."

Looking back at these stories now, I wince at some of the overwrought dialog (in my defense, it was something of a house style at the time), but other than the overly intense exclamatory style, I find I'm more pleased with this series of stories than I am with some of my other work from this period.

The Mangog sequence uses a structure I'm particularly fond of—the Quest story, in which our hero, accompanied by loyal allies, sets off on an epic journey to achieve a lofty goal, and along the way encounters obstacles in the form of external and internal challenges which cause him to reappraise both himself and his relationship with the world around him.

In other words: buddies, battles, bad-guys (and girls) on the run.

The astute reader (i.e.: anyone who's scanned the Cliff notes version of *The Odyssey* for a high school English class) will recognize that Thor's quest here resembles in general terms the homeward journey of Odysseus from Troy. There's a simple reason for that: when I steal, I steal from the best. As I mentioned above, for me, Thor is a figure of myth, and when you write about figures of myth, you turn to myths for inspiration. (Stan and Jack certainly did so in their terrific Hercules/Pluto storyline a few years earlier.)

Something else that reflects my personal approach to story-telling also appears in this volume: taking a family of characters (in this case, the Asgardian "family" of Odin, Thor, and their friends and companions) and breaking them into groups for subsidiary adventures all tied to the central storyline.

(We have Thor and the Warriors Three pursuing the main quest, Odin and his old-guard Asgardian warriors standing firm at home, Sif and Hildegarde on what appears at first to be a side quest.)

Breaking a story into parallel quest-lines like this gave me the opportunity to develop each group's adventures—and characters—dynamically (and allowed me to switch focus when things started to slow down or reach a climax in any given storyline).

It's a technique I love to use and it's probably why I've written so many group books over the years.

There are basically two stories told in this volume—the first, of course, follows the threat of Mangog. The second deals with Ego Prime and the introduction of the Young Gods. Looking back on both sequences now, what strikes me isn't the scope of these adventures—though they don't lack for scope—but the number of characters involved, new and old. Odin and his Asgardian old-guard warriors Khan and Whitemane and Rongor; Thor and his Warriors Three; Sif and Hildegarde and Silas Grant and Tana Nile; Heimdall and Kamorr. And the three Norns, the Fates, who witness all while weaving their webs of destiny.

Whew.

In these days of "decompressed" storytelling, the amount of material you hold in your hands would fill a couple dozen issues, not just ten. Kinda makes the hefty price tag for a *Marvel Masterworks* hardcover seem like a bargain, doesn't it?

One final word before I leave you to it. Remember I said that Big John Buscema was every bit a master of epic storytelling as Jack Kirby before him? If you want proof, take a look at page 12 in issue #202.

Subtle yet grand, thoughtful yet epic.

Big John Buscema at his best.

***

I hope you enjoy these tales of Asgardian heroes as much as I enjoyed writing them.

Thanks for listening.

Catch you next time.

2011

THOR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP™
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JAN
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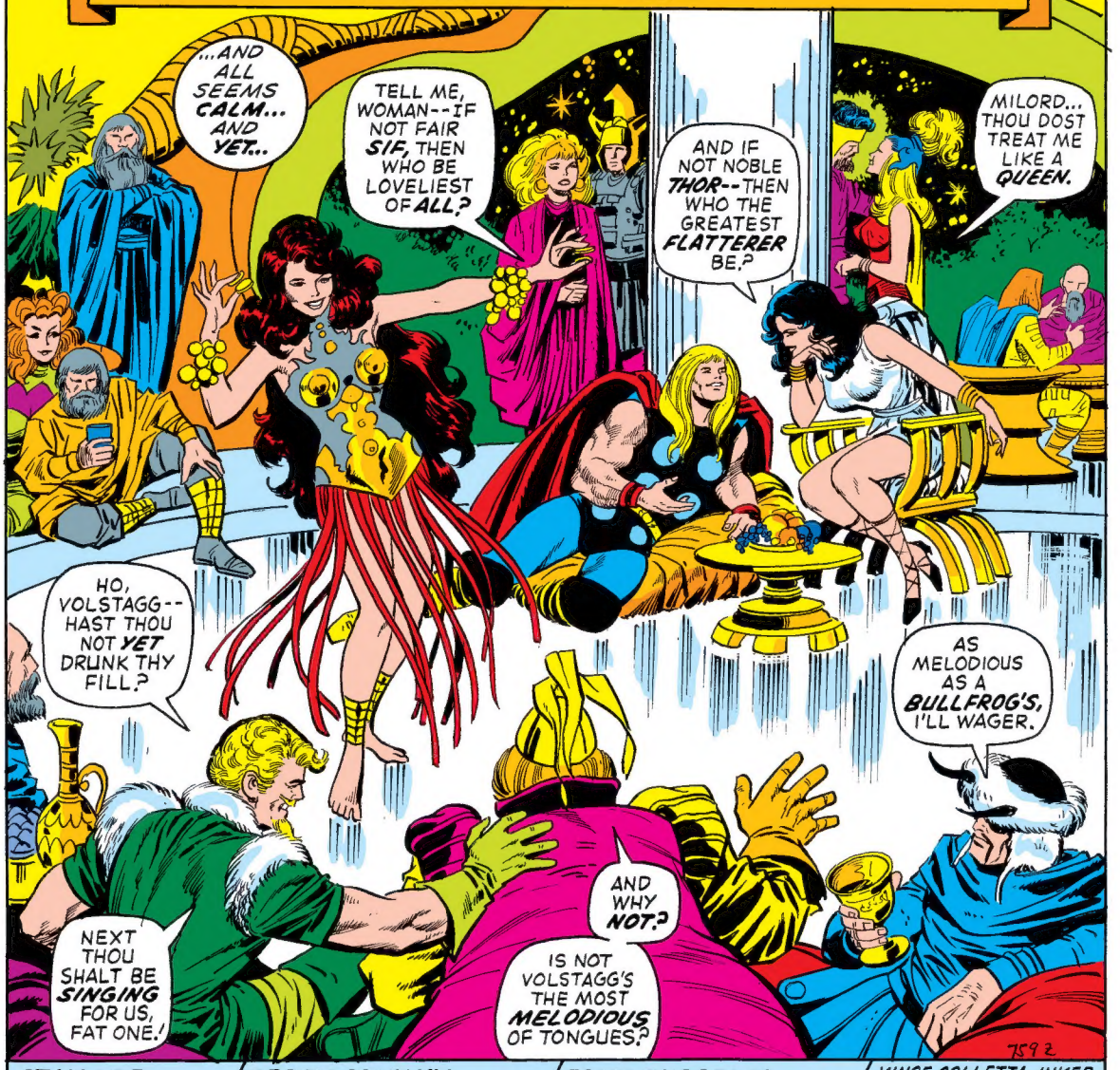
THE MIGHTY
THOR
™
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
STAND YE FIRM AGAINST THE TROLLS' ATTACK--
--OR ASGARD FALLS--AND THEN THE EARTH!!
THE WELL AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD!

THE MIGHTY THOR!™

IN THE SHADOW OF MAN GOG!

FESTIVAL IN ASGARD! WITH THE DEFEAT AND DISPATCHING OF THOR'S TREACHEROUS HALF-BROTHER LOKI, ALL SEEMS JOYOUS IN ASGARD ONCE MORE... LIGHT MUSIC FILLS THE HALLS, MOVEMENT AND COLOR REIGN WHERE AGONY ONCE STALKED...


...AND ALL SEEMS CALM... AND YET...
TELL ME, WOMAN--IF NOT FAIR SIF, THEN WHO BE LOVELIEST OF ALL?
AND IF NOT NOBLE THOR--THEN WHO THE GREATEST FLATTERER BE,?
MILORD... THOU DOST TREAT ME LIKE A QUEEN.
HO, VOLSTAGG--HAST THOU NOT YET DRUNK THY FILL?
AS MELODIOUS AS A BULLFROG'S, I'LL WAGER.
NEXT THOU SHALT BE SINGING FOR US, FAT ONE!
IS NOT VOLSTAGG'S THE MOST MELODIOUS OF TONGUES?
AND WHY NOT?

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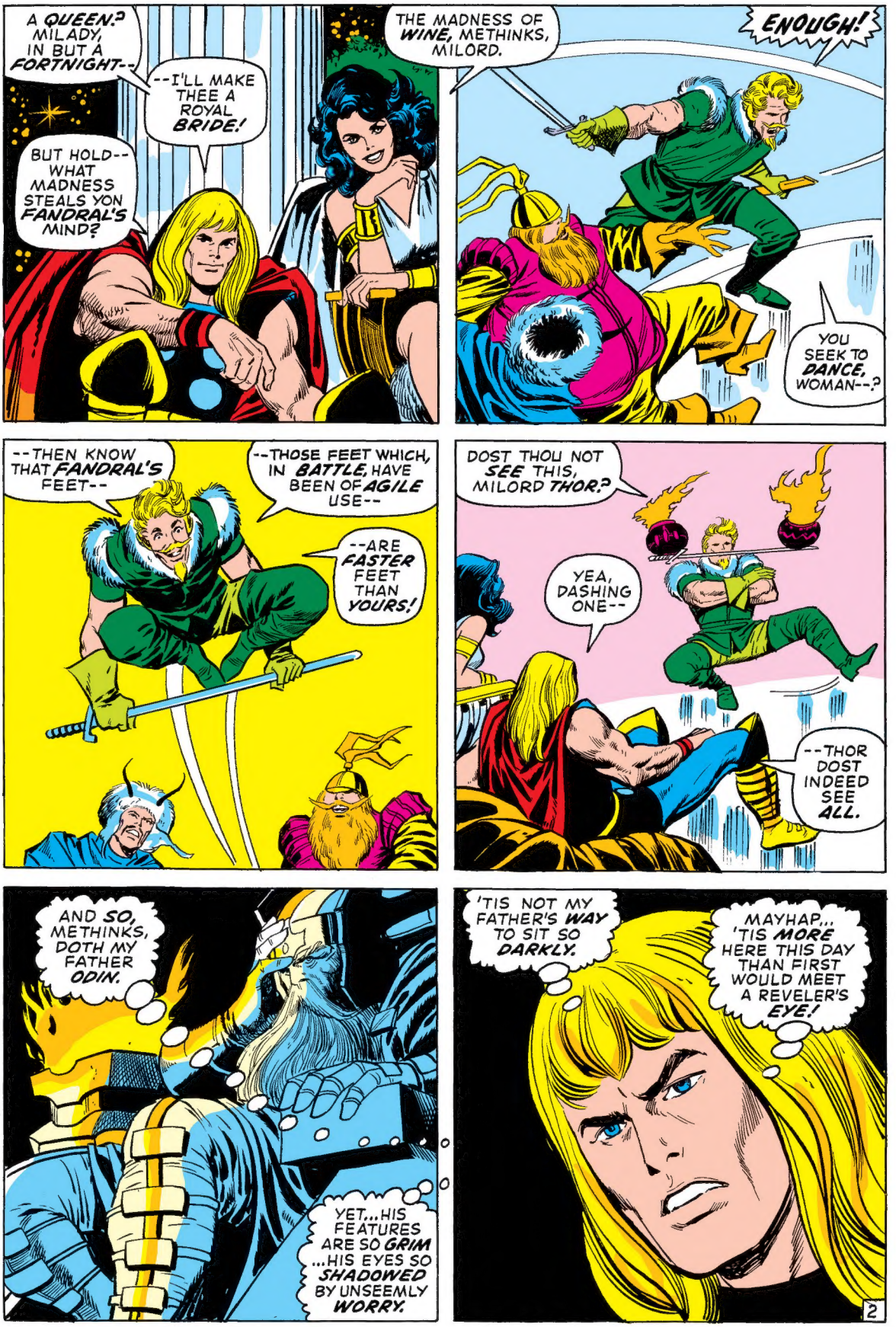
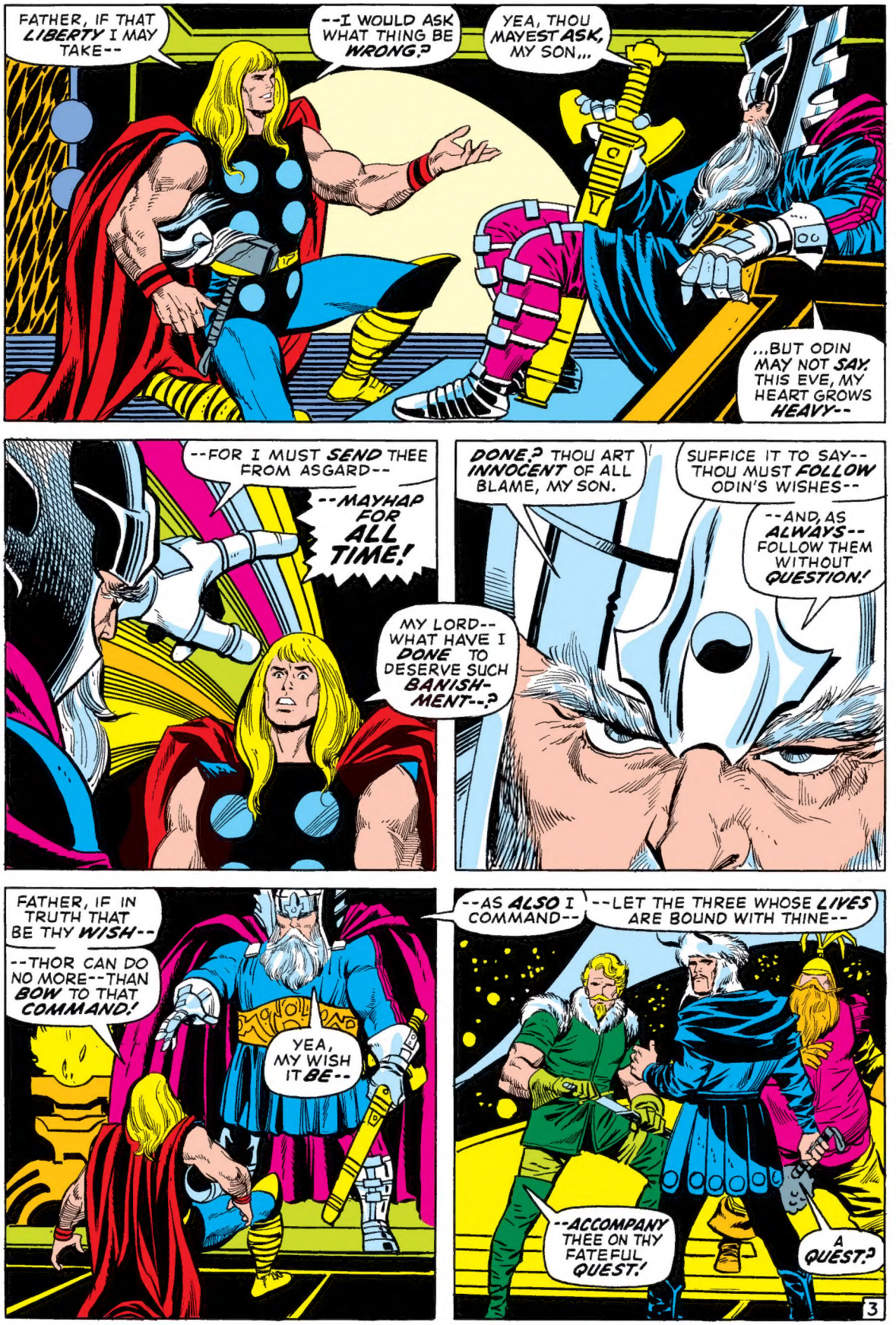
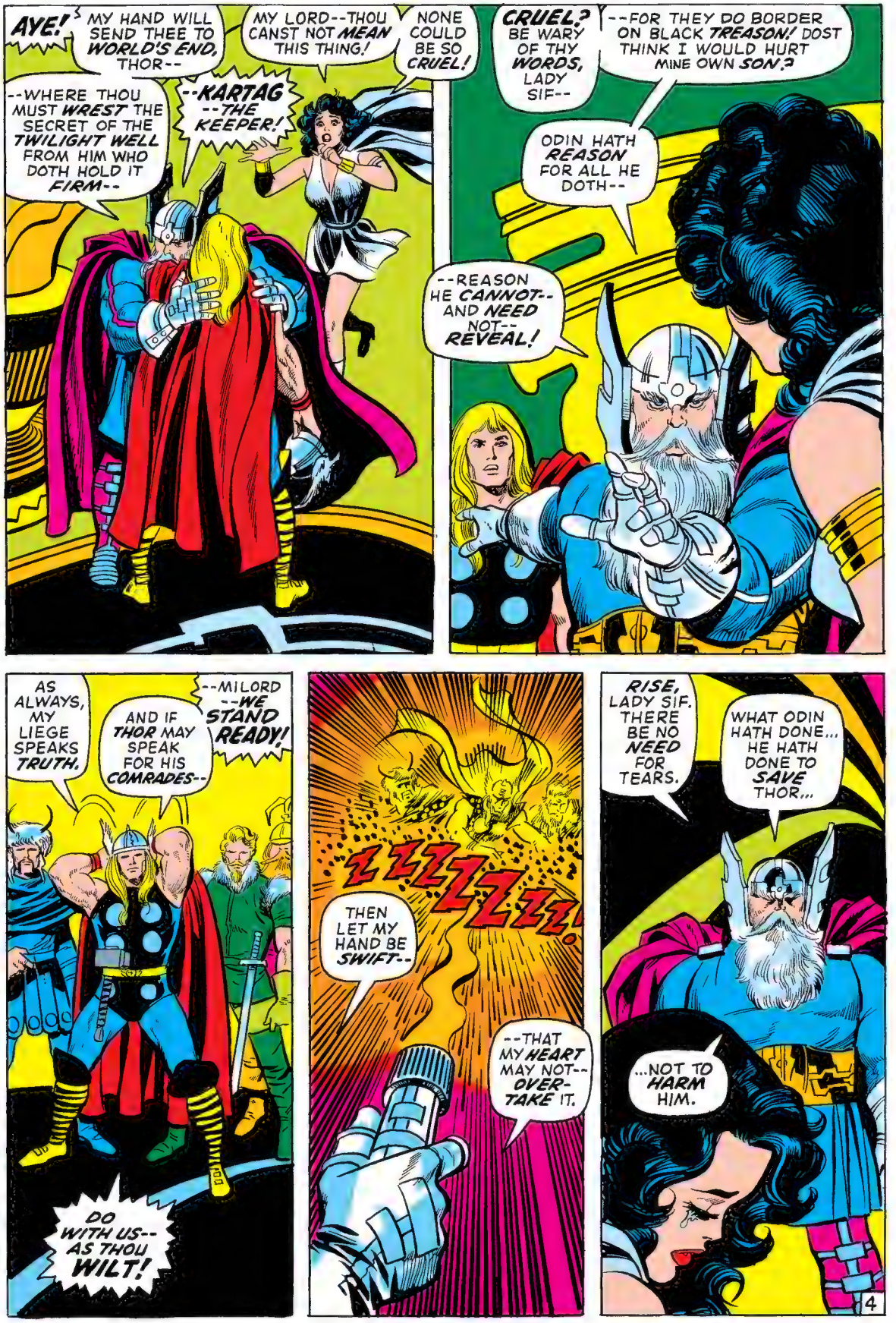
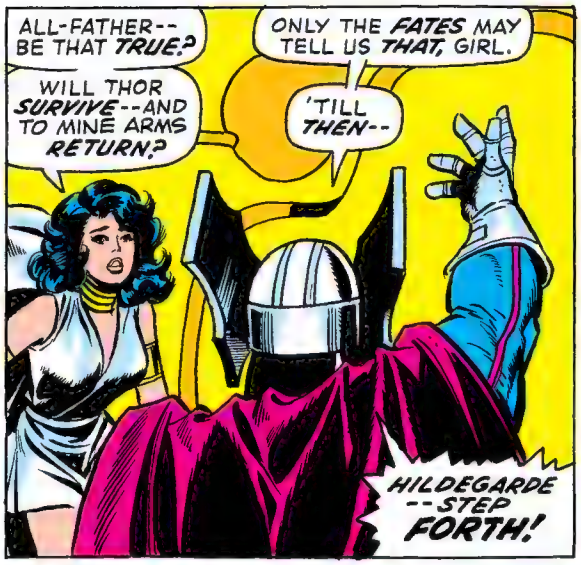
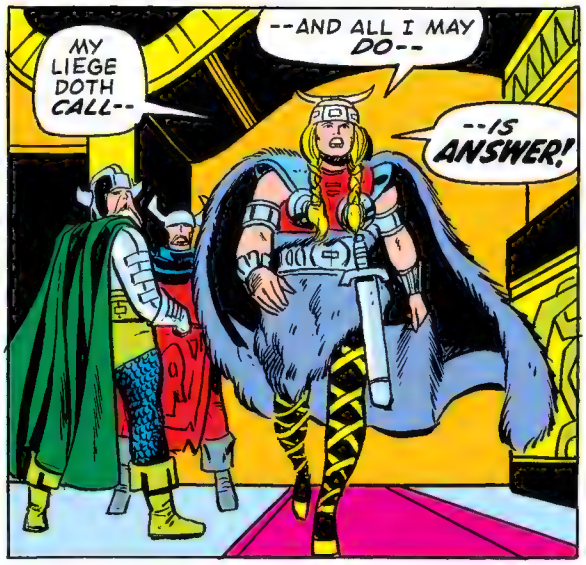
STAN LEE, EDITOR / GERRY CONWAY, WRITER / JOHN BUSCEMA, ARTIST / VINCE COLLETTA, INKER ARTIE SIMEK, LETTERER

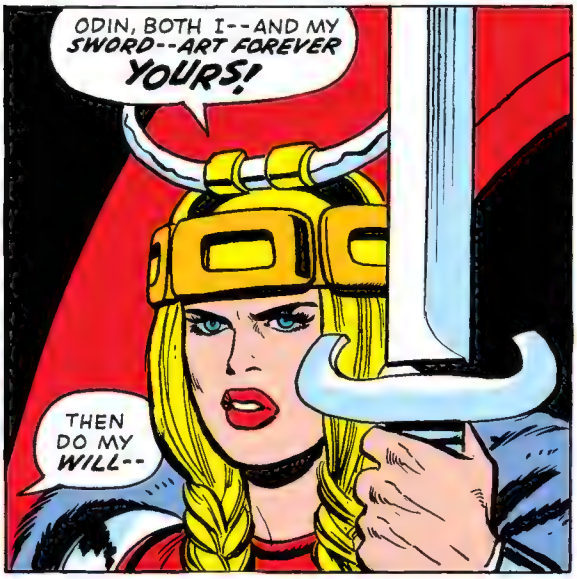

A QUEEN? MILADY, IN BUT A FORTNIGHT--
--I'LL MAKE THEE A ROYAL BRIDE!
BUT HOLD-- WHAT MADNESS STEALS YON FANDRAL'S MIND?
THE MADNESS OF WINE, METHINKS, MILORD.
ENOUGH!
YOU SEEK TO DANCE, WOMAN--?
--THEN KNOW THAT FANDRAL'S FEET--
--THOSE FEET WHICH, IN BATTLE, HAVE BEEN OF AGILE USE--
--ARE FASTER FEET THAN YOURS!
DOST THOU NOT SEE THIS, MILORD THOR?
YEA, DASHING ONE--
--THOR DOST INDEED SEE ALL.
AND SO, METHINKS, DOTH MY FATHER ODIN.
YET... HIS FEATURES ARE SO GRIM ...HIS EYES SO SHADOWED BY UNSEEMLY WORRY.
'TIS NOT MY FATHER'S WAY TO SIT SO DARKLY.
MAYHAP... 'TIS MORE HERE THIS DAY THAN FIRST WOULD MEET A REVELER'S EYE!
2

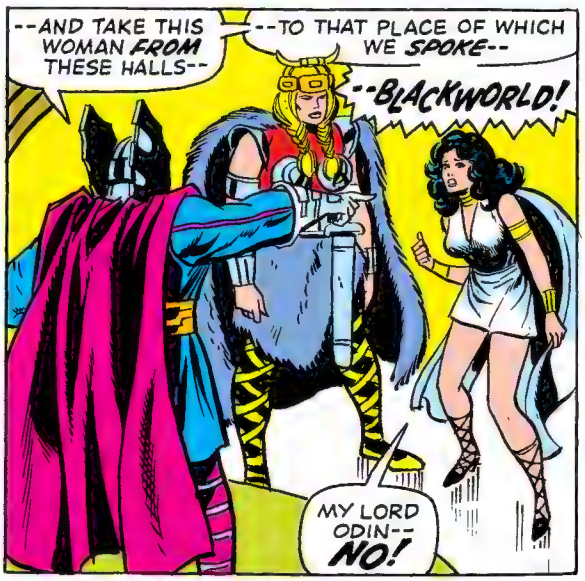

FATHER, IF THAT LIBERTY I MAY TAKE--
--I WOULD ASK WHAT THING BE WRONG?
YEA, THOU MAYEST ASK, MY SON...
...BUT ODIN MAY NOT SAY, THIS EVE, MY HEART GROWS HEAVY--
--FOR I MUST SEND THEE FROM ASGARD--
--MAYHAP FOR ALL TIME!
MY LORD--WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE SUCH BANISH-MENT--?
DONE? THOU ART INNOCENT OF ALL BLAME, MY SON.
SUFFICE IT TO SAY--THOU MUST FOLLOW ODIN'S WISHES--
--AND, AS ALWAYS--FOLLOW THEM WITHOUT QUESTION!
FATHER, IF IN TRUTH THAT BE THY WISH--
--THOR CAN DO NO MORE--THAN BOW TO THAT COMMAND!
YEA, MY WISH IT BE--
--AS ALSO I COMMAND--
--LET THE THREE WHOSE LIVES ARE BOUND WITH THINE--
--ACCOMPANY THEE ON THY FATEFUL QUEST!
A QUEST?
3


AYE!
MY HAND WILL SEND THEE TO WORLD'S END, THOR--
MY LORD--THOU CANST NOT MEAN THIS THING!
NONE COULD BE SO CRUEL!
--WHERE THOU MUST WREST THE SECRET OF THE TWILIGHT WELL FROM HIM WHO DOTH HOLD IT FIRM--
--KARTAG --THE KEEPER!
CRUEL? BE WARY OF THY WORDS, LADY SIF--
--FOR THEY DO BORDER ON BLACK TREASON! DOST THINK I WOULD HURT MINE OWN SON?
ODIN HATH REASON FOR ALL HE DOTH--
--REASON HE CANNOT-- AND NEED NOT-- REVEAL!
AS ALWAYS, MY LIEGE SPEAKS TRUTH.
AND IF THOR MAY SPEAK FOR HIS COMRADES--
--MILORD --WE STAND READY!
DO WITH US-- AS THOU WILT!
ZZZZZZZ.
THEN LET MY HAND BE SWIFT--
--THAT MY HEART MAY NOT-- OVER-TAKE IT.
RISE, LADY SIF. THERE BE NO NEED FOR TEARS.
WHAT ODIN HATH DONE... HE HATH DONE TO SAVE THOR...
...NOT TO HARM HIM.
4

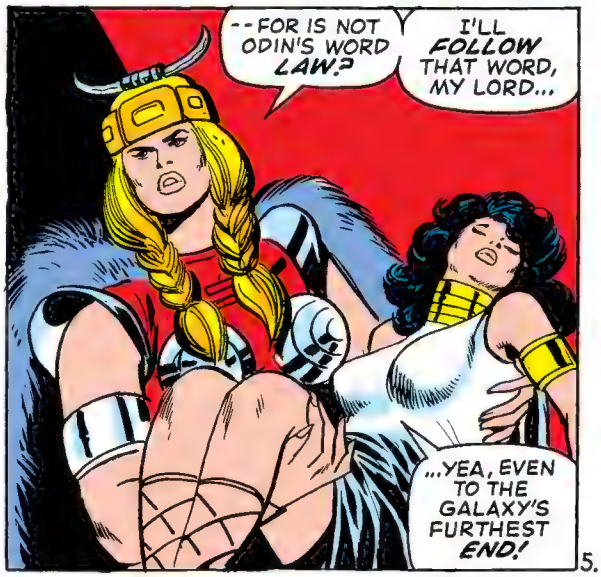

ALL-FATHER--BE THAT TRUE?
WILL THOR SURVIVE--AND TO MINE ARMS RETURN?
ONLY THE FATES MAY TELL US THAT, GIRL.
'TILL THEN--
HILDEGARDE --STEP FORTH!


MY LIEGE DOTH CALL--
--AND ALL I MAY DO--
--IS ANSWER!


ODIN, BOTH I--AND MY SWORD--ART FOREVER YOURS!
THEN DO MY WILL--


--AND TAKE THIS WOMAN FROM THESE HALLS--
--TO THAT PLACE OF WHICH WE SPOKE--
--BLACKWORLD!
MY LORD ODIN--NO!

HUSH, WOMAN--
CHUNK


--FOR IS NOT ODIN'S WORD LAW?
I'LL FOLLOW THAT WORD, MY LORD...
...YEA, EVEN TO THE GALAXY'S FURTHEST END!

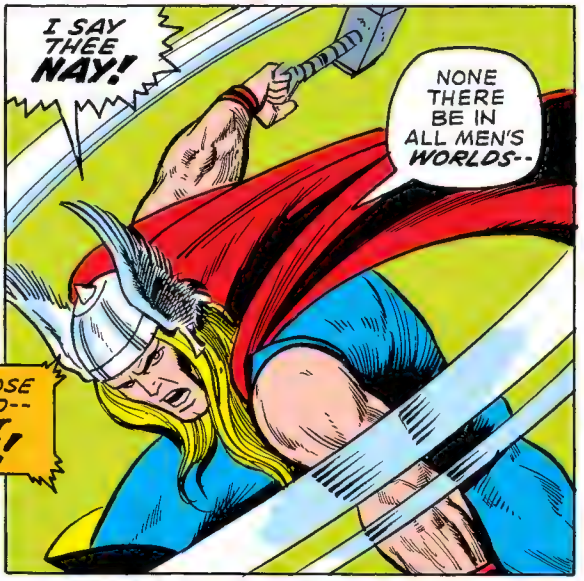
THOU DOST SPEAK MORE WISELY THAN THOU DOST THINK, GIRL!
CCCCRACKLLLEE
--FOR IN TRUTH, 'TIS THERE THAT ODIN SENDS THEE.
IN THEE DOTH THE FATE OF ASGARD RIDE--
"--FOR THIS EVE, THAT BLESSED LAND--WILL FALL!"
AND TO ODIN'S POWER, TIME AND SPACE ARE AS NOTHING--
--AS THEY ARE NOTHING TO THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND!
--MY LORD-- MY LORD THOR--!
--WHERE--?
EASE YOURSELF, WARRIOR.
THOU DOST KNOW...THOU MUST OBEY THE ALL-FATHER'S WILL.
YEA--BUT DOTH THAT RELIEVE ME OF MY GRIEF--?
--THAT, FROM MY BETROTHED'S ARMS--THE FATES HAVE TAKEN ME?
THINKEST THOU--THOU ART ALONE?
'TWAS A WARRIOR OF ASGARD I DID FOOLISHLY SEEK TO PLEASE...
...ONE OF THOSE THREE WHO NOW BE WITH THY BELOVED.
BUT WE'LL HAVE TIME ENOW FOR WOMAN'S TALK--
WHEN WE DO REACH SHELTER-- THERE!
6

AND, HALF A UNIVERSE AWAY, THREE WONDERING GODS DO PLANETFALL MAKE...
THOR--WHAT BE OUR PURPOSE HERE.?
NAY--IT APPEARS I BE NOT MY FATHER'S CONFIDANT--
DOST EVEN THOU KNOW ODIN'S SECRET.?
--WHICH MAY BE JUST, THOUGH THOR BE NOT THE ONE TO JUDGE.
THEN WHO SHALL JUDGE, MILORD.?
THOSE WHO SING OUR BATTLE SONGS.? YEA...I THINK SHE'D FIND THAT FITTING...
AND WHO BE THE SHE, GRIM HOGUN.?
AHH...'TIS MINE TO KNOW, MILORD.
THEN KNOW THIS AS WELL--
LEGENDS HAVE I HEARD ABOUT THIS CRUEL KEEPER--
--AND ENOUGH DO I KNOW-- TO GUESS HOW TO FIND HIM--!
THERE--THE ENCHANTMENT OF MJOLNIR DOTH POINT THE WAY!
TO THE SOUTH MUST WE GO, MY FRIENDS--
--AND THERE--
--FIGHT HIM WHO SLEEPS!
7

HOURS RUN QUICKLY BY, AND INTO A FALSE GRAY DAWN DO THE THREE SEARCHERS ROAM, UNTIL--
ART AFRAID, VOLUMINOUS ONE?
ART MAD, IF SO DOST THINK! WHY, VOLSTAGG, BUT--

SCREEEE
HOLD!
EEEEEE!

KEEP THY DISTANCE, INSECTS.
YE WALK UPON THE KEEPER'S TERRAIN!
AND THOSE WHO DO-- MUST DIE!

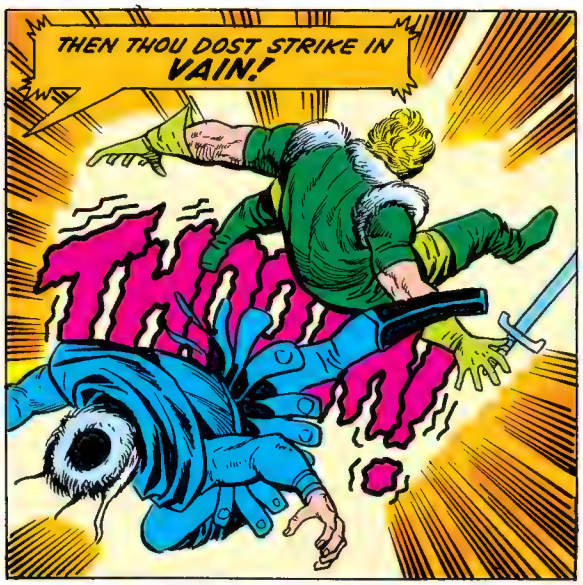

I SAY THEE NAY!
NONE THERE BE IN ALL MEN'S WORLDS--

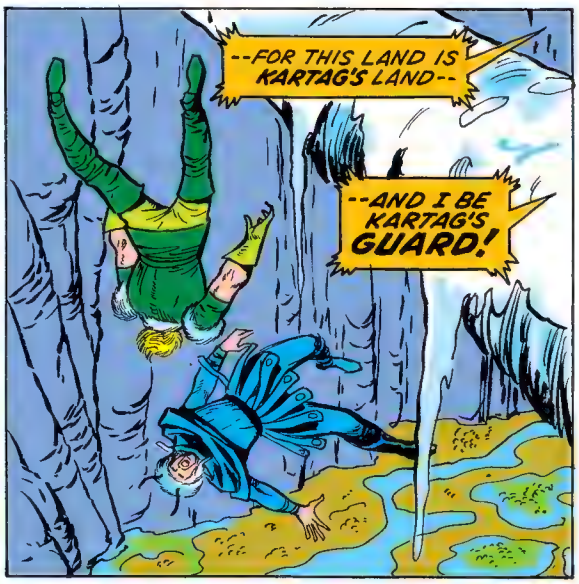
WAK!
--WHO MAY TELL THE GOD OF THUNDER--

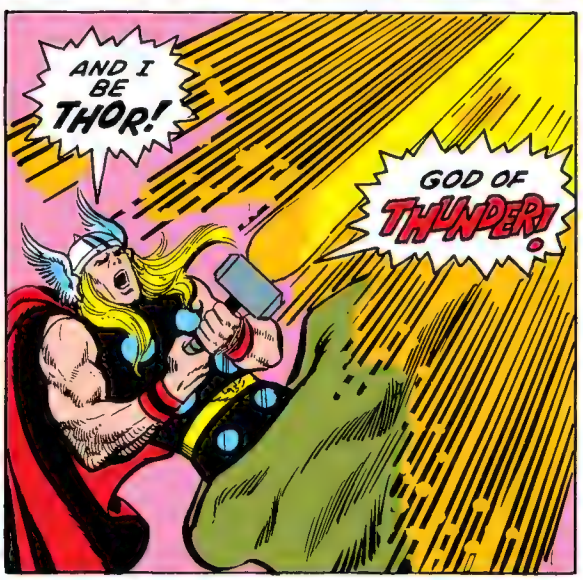
--JUST WHERE HIS FEET MAY LAND!
UNTIL TODAY! I STAND FOR KARTAG--

--TIS HE WHO GAVE ME VOICE--
--TIS HE WHO BE SUPREME!
ONLY ODIN BE SUPREME-- AND SO WE STRIKE--

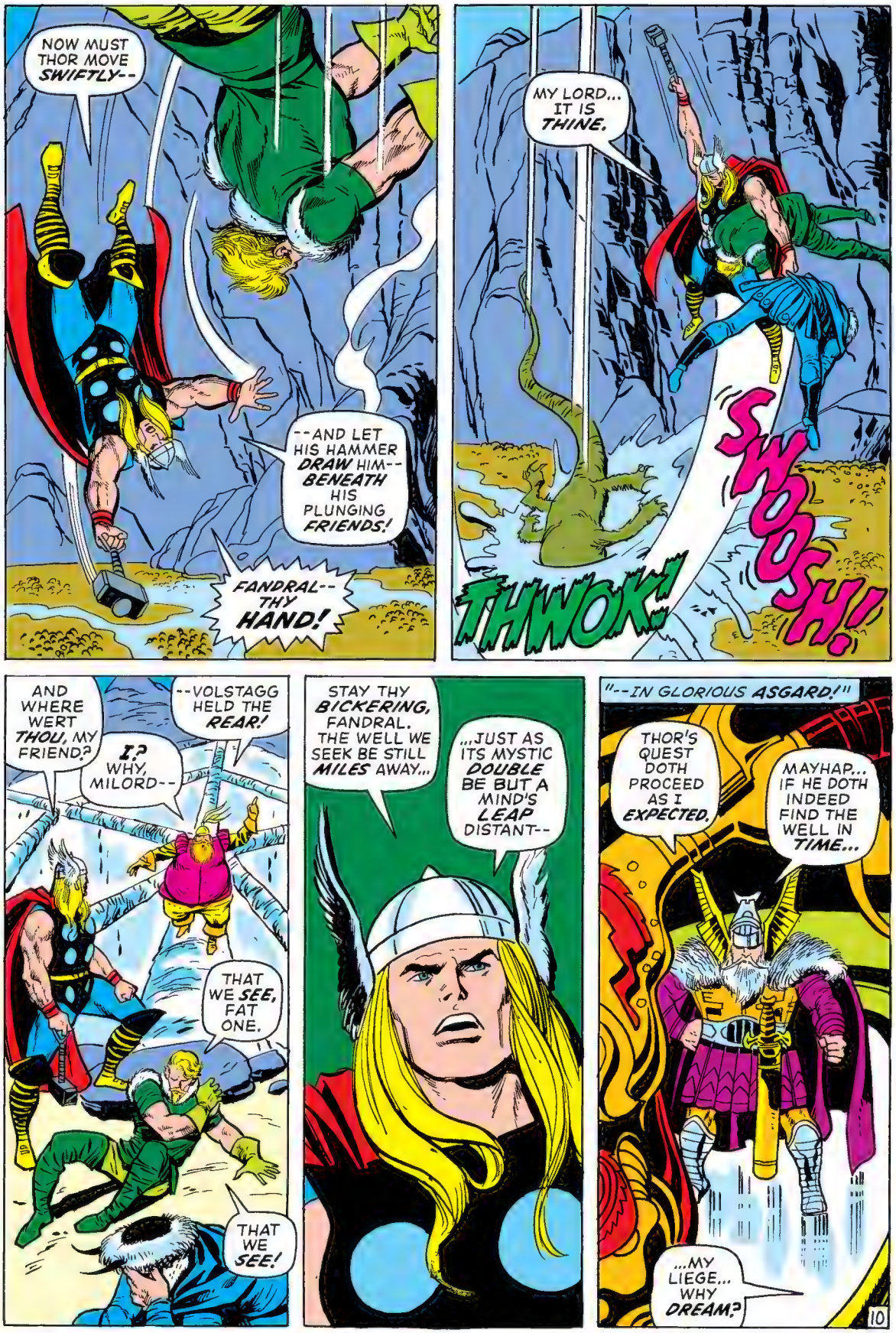
--FOR ODIN--
--FOR ASGARRD!

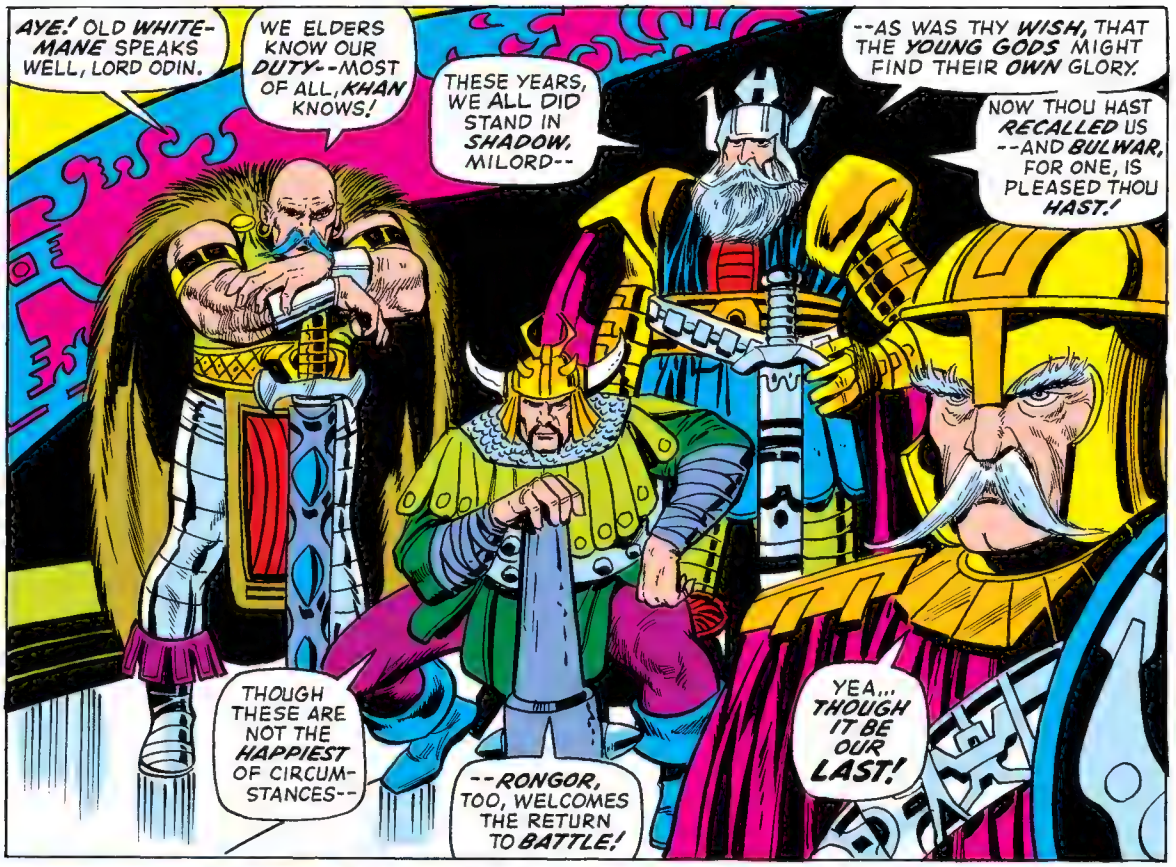

THEN THOU DOST STRIKE IN VAIN!
THUNK!

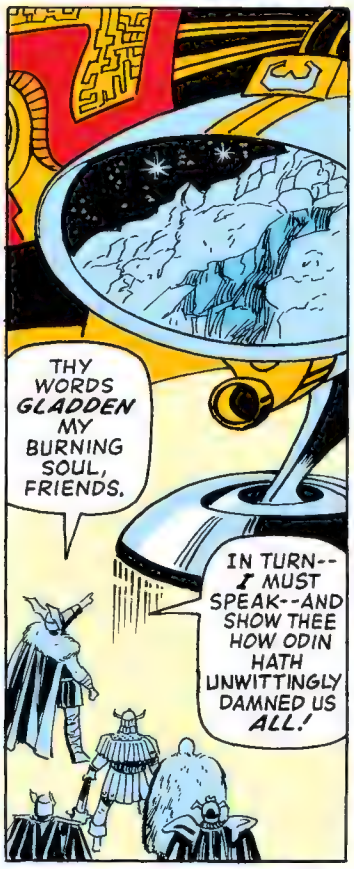

--FOR THIS LAND IS KARTAG'S LAND--
--AND I BE KARTAG'S GUARD!

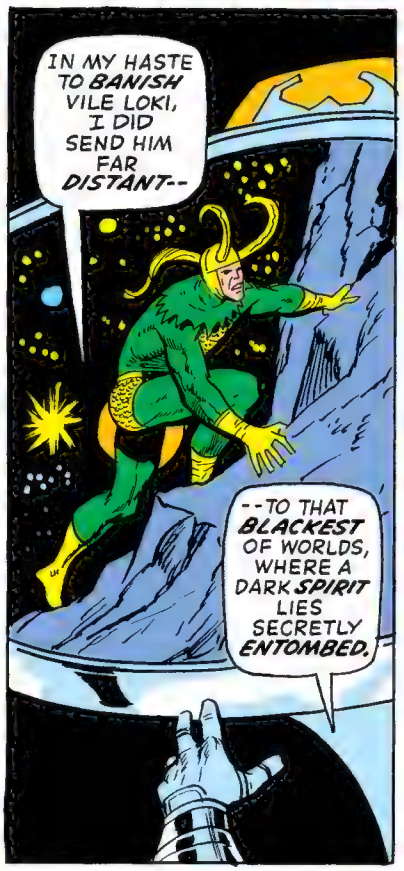

AND I BE THOR!
GOD OF THUNDER!

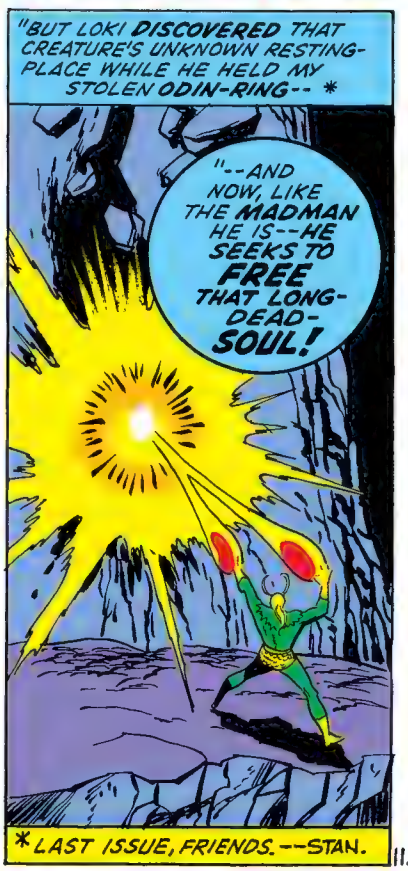
--AND LIKE A DISPLACED LEAF--
--THE CREATURE CURLS--AND FALLS AWAY!


NOW MUST THOR MOVE SWIFTLY--
--AND LET HIS HAMMER DRAW HIM-- BENEATH HIS PLUNGING FRIENDS!
FANDRAL-- THY HAND!
MY LORD... IT IS THINE.
THWOK!
SWOOSH!!
AND WHERE WERT THOU, MY FRIEND?
I? WHY, MILORD--
--VOLSTAGG HELD THE REAR!
THAT WE SEE, FAT ONE.
THAT WE SEE!
STAY THY BICKERING, FANDRAL. THE WELL WE SEEK BE STILL MILES AWAY...
...JUST AS ITS MYSTIC DOUBLE BE BUT A MIND'S LEAP DISTANT--
"--IN GLORIOUS ASGARD!"
THOR'S QUEST DOTH PROCEED AS I EXPECTED.
MAYHAP... IF HE DOTH INDEED FIND THE WELL IN TIME...
...MY LIEGE... WHY DREAM?
10

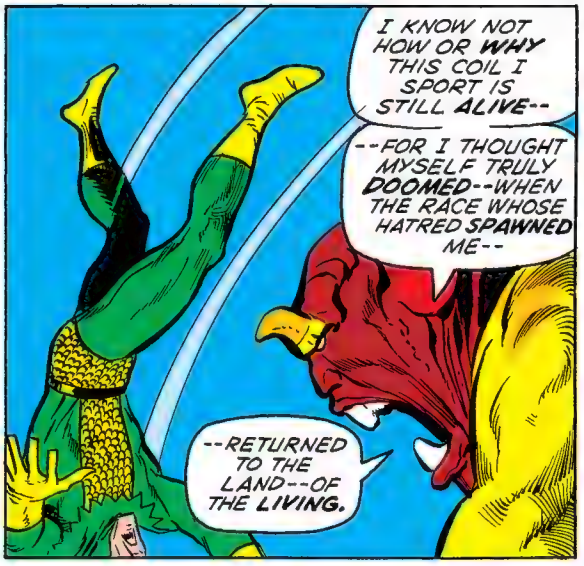

AYE! OLD WHITE-MANE SPEAKS WELL, LORD ODIN.
WE ELDERS KNOW OUR DUTY--MOST OF ALL, KHAN KNOWS!
THESE YEARS, WE ALL DID STAND IN SHADOW, MILORD--
--AS WAS THY WISH, THAT THE YOUNG GODS MIGHT FIND THEIR OWN GLORY.
NOW THOU HAST RECALLED US --AND BULWAR, FOR ONE, IS PLEASED THOU HAST!
THOUGH THESE ARE NOT THE HAPPIEST OF CIRCUM-STANCES--
--RONGOR, TOO, WELCOMES THE RETURN TO BATTLE!
YEA... THOUGH IT BE OUR LAST!

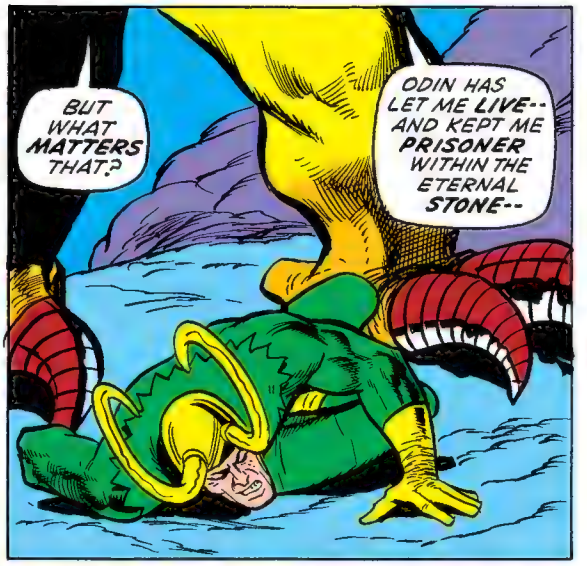

THY WORDS GLADDEN MY BURNING SOUL, FRIENDS.
IN TURN-- I MUST SPEAK--AND SHOW THEE HOW ODIN HATH UNWITTINGLY DAMNED US ALL!

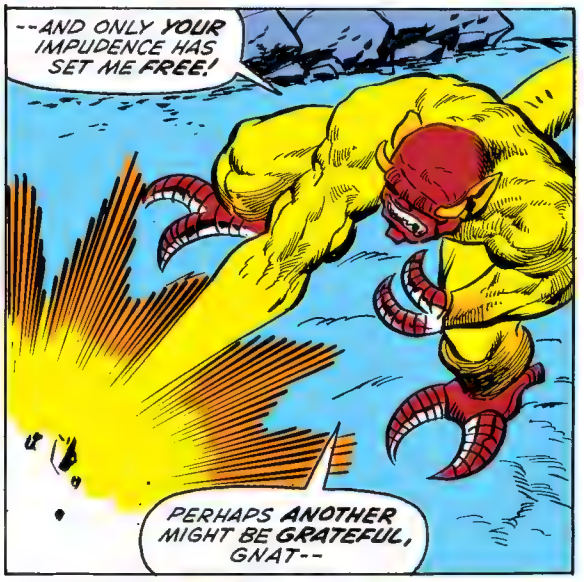

IN MY HASTE TO BANISH VILE LOKI, I DID SEND HIM FAR DISTANT--
--TO THAT BLACKEST OF WORLDS, WHERE A DARK SPIRIT LIES SECRETLY ENTOMBED.


"BUT LOKI DISCOVERED THAT CREATURE'S UNKNOWN RESTING-PLACE WHILE HE HELD MY STOLEN ODIN-RING-- *
"--AND NOW, LIKE THE MADMAN HE IS--HE SEEKS TO FREE THAT LONG-DEAD-SOUL!
*LAST ISSUE, FRIENDS.--STAN.

MAN-GOG!
AYE--AND WHO ARE YOU --WHO HAVE DISTURBED MY ENDLESS REST?
LOOK THEE LONG, MY FRIEND-- AND DEEP!
SEE BEFORE THEE A KINDRED SOUL--AND KNOW THAT LOKI HATH COME--TO ASSIST THEE!
ASSIST? YOU ARE A MOST PRESUMPTUOUS LOT, YOU IMMORTALS--
EACH PLACES HIS OWN DESTINY ON A LEVEL-- WITH THAT OF TRUE GODS!
ASSIST ME?
GNAT--BE GRATEFUL I DO NOT MAKE YOU DIE--
--INSTANTLY!

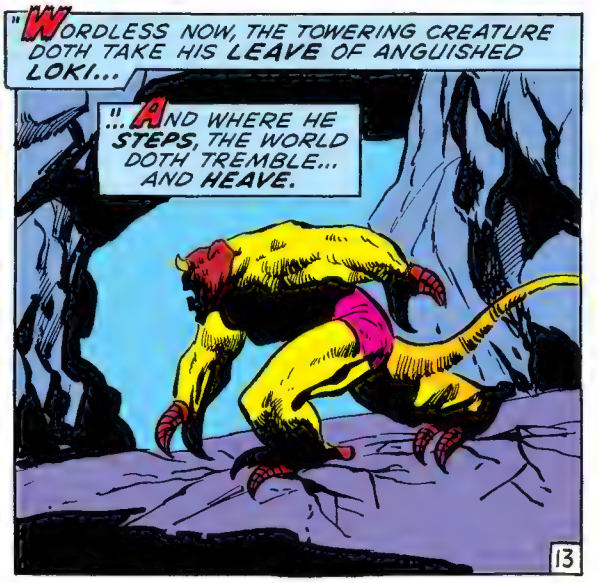

I KNOW NOT HOW OR WHY THIS COIL I SPORT IS STILL ALIVE--
--FOR I THOUGHT MYSELF TRULY DOOMED--WHEN THE RACE WHOSE HATRED SPAWNED ME--
--RETURNED TO THE LAND--OF THE LIVING.

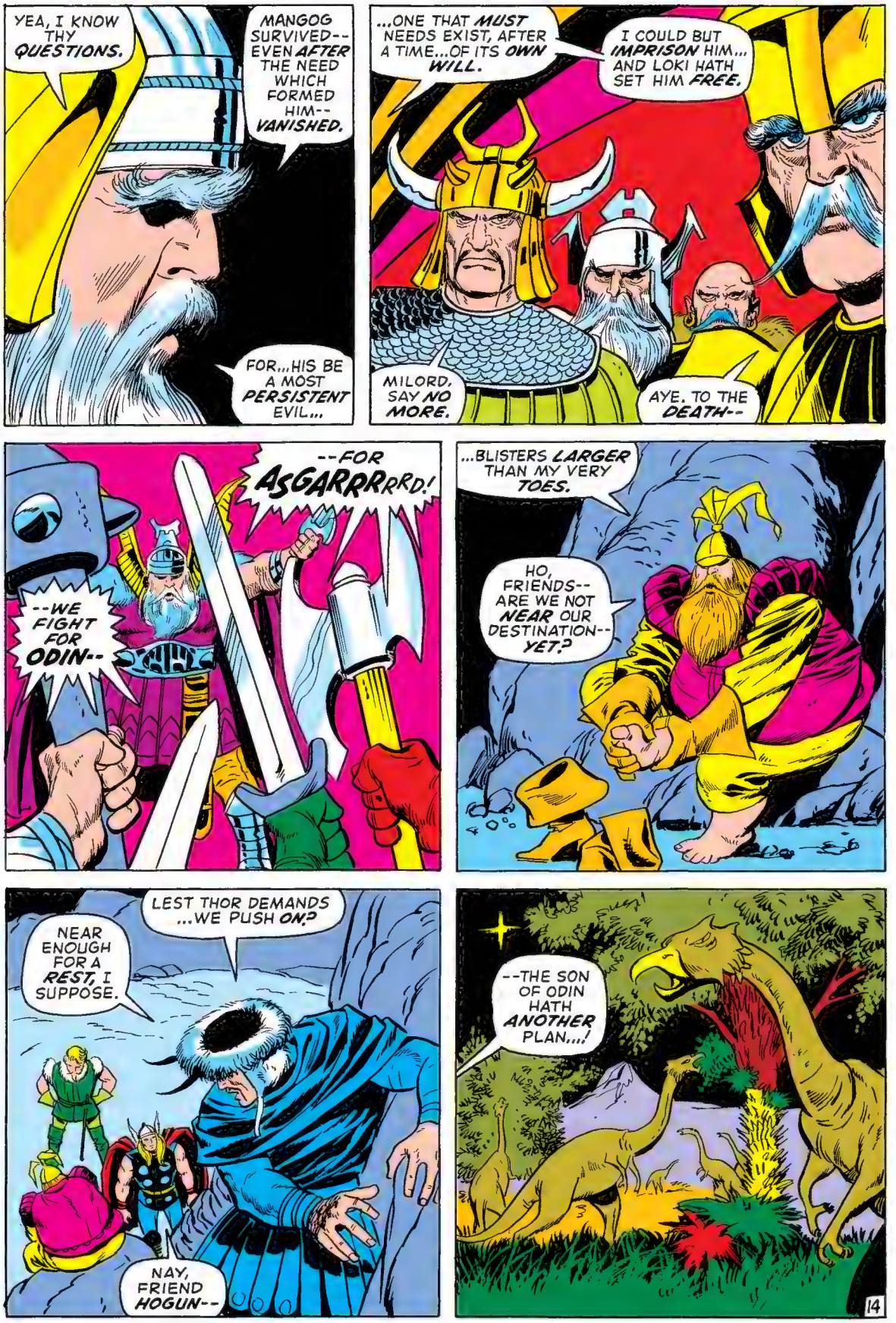

BUT WHAT MATTERS THAT?
ODIN HAS LET ME LIVE-- AND KEPT ME PRISONER WITHIN THE ETERNAL STONE--

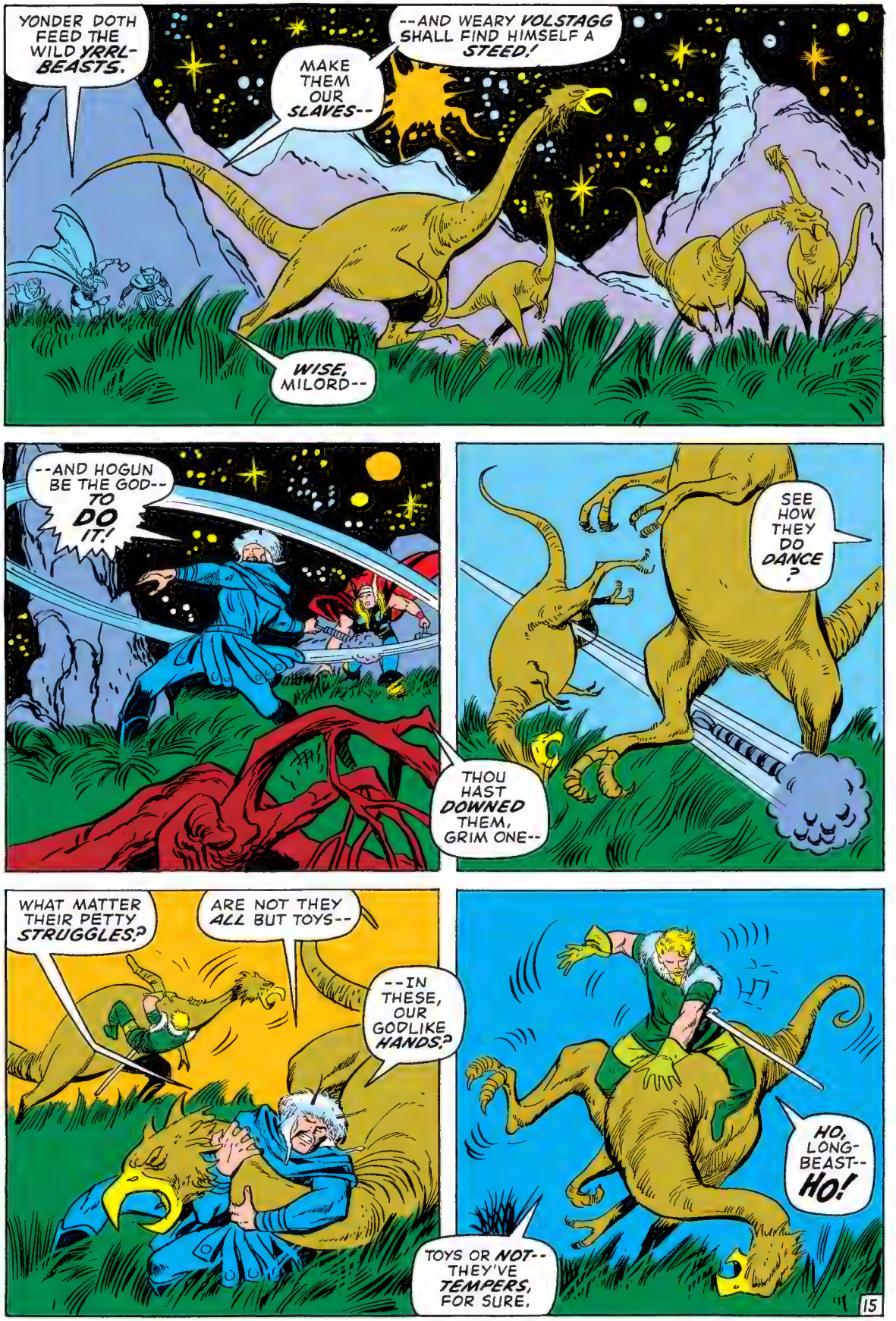

--AND ONLY YOUR IMPUDENCE HAS SET ME FREE!
PERHAPS ANOTHER MIGHT BE GRATEFUL, GNAT--

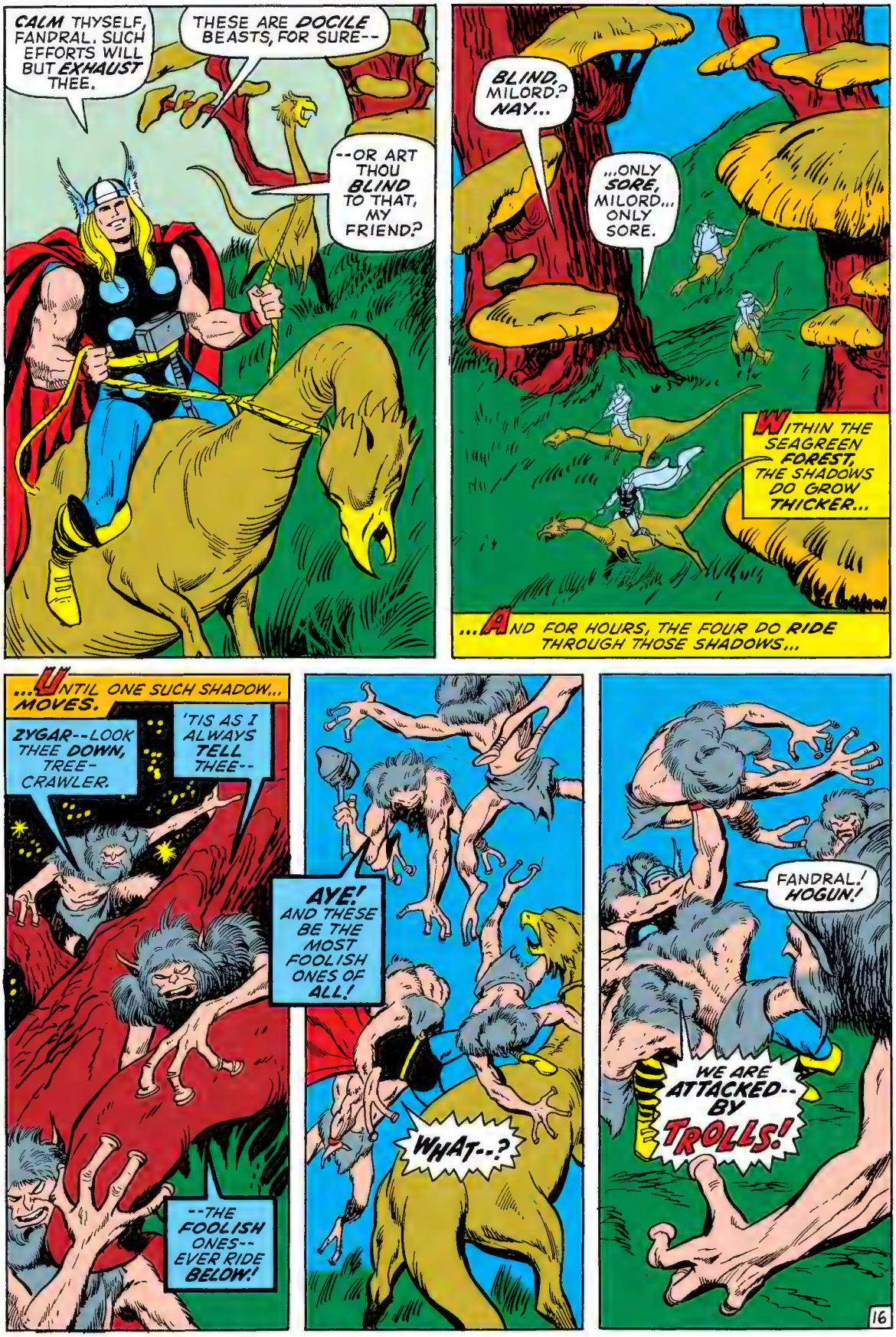
--BUT THAT OTHER WOULD NOT BE-- MANGOG!

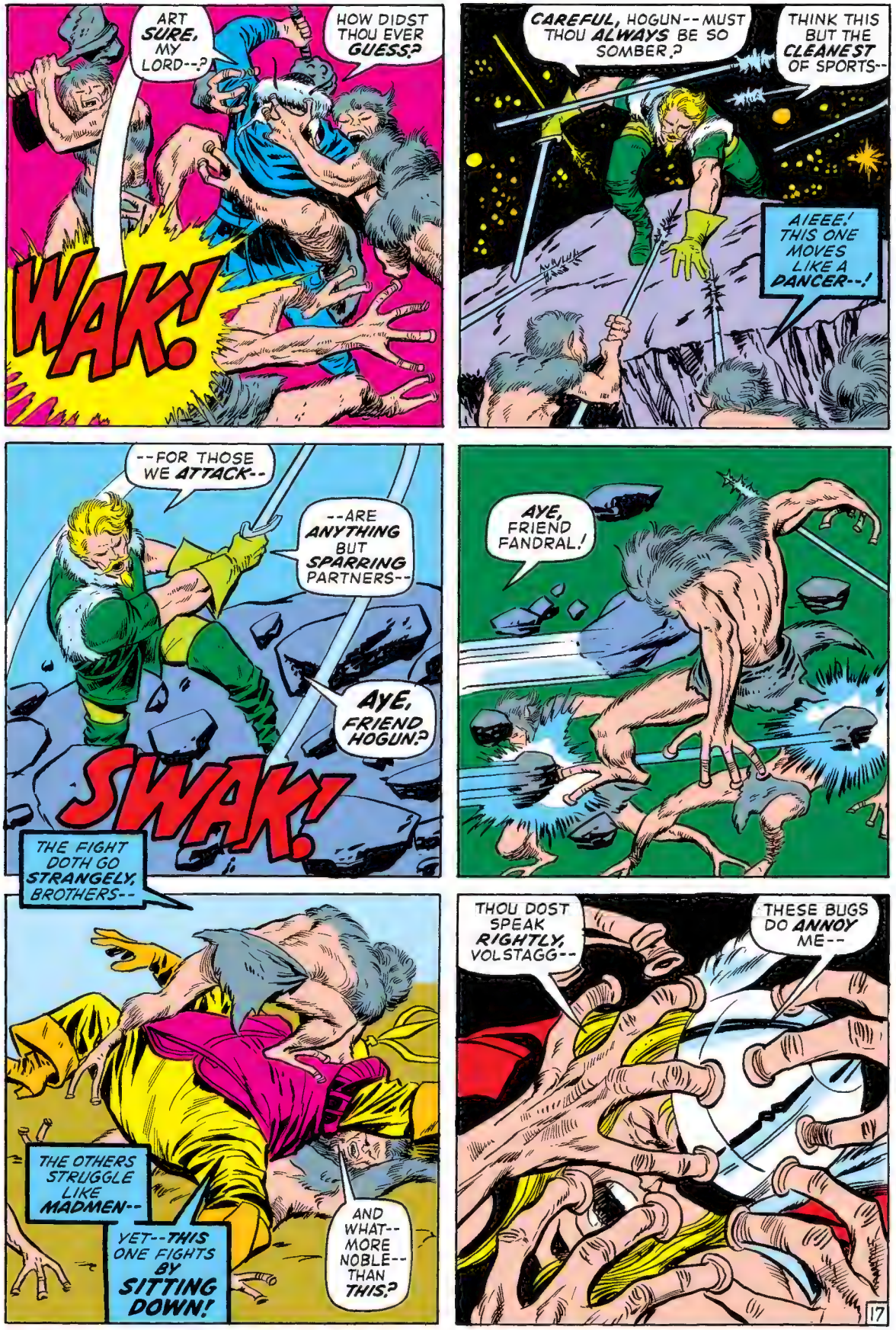
LET YOU BE GRATEFUL THOUGH, MY FRIEND--
--THAT I KILLED YOU NOT--
--BUT INSTEAD SEALED YOU WITHIN THAT BLOCK OF COOL DARK AMBER!

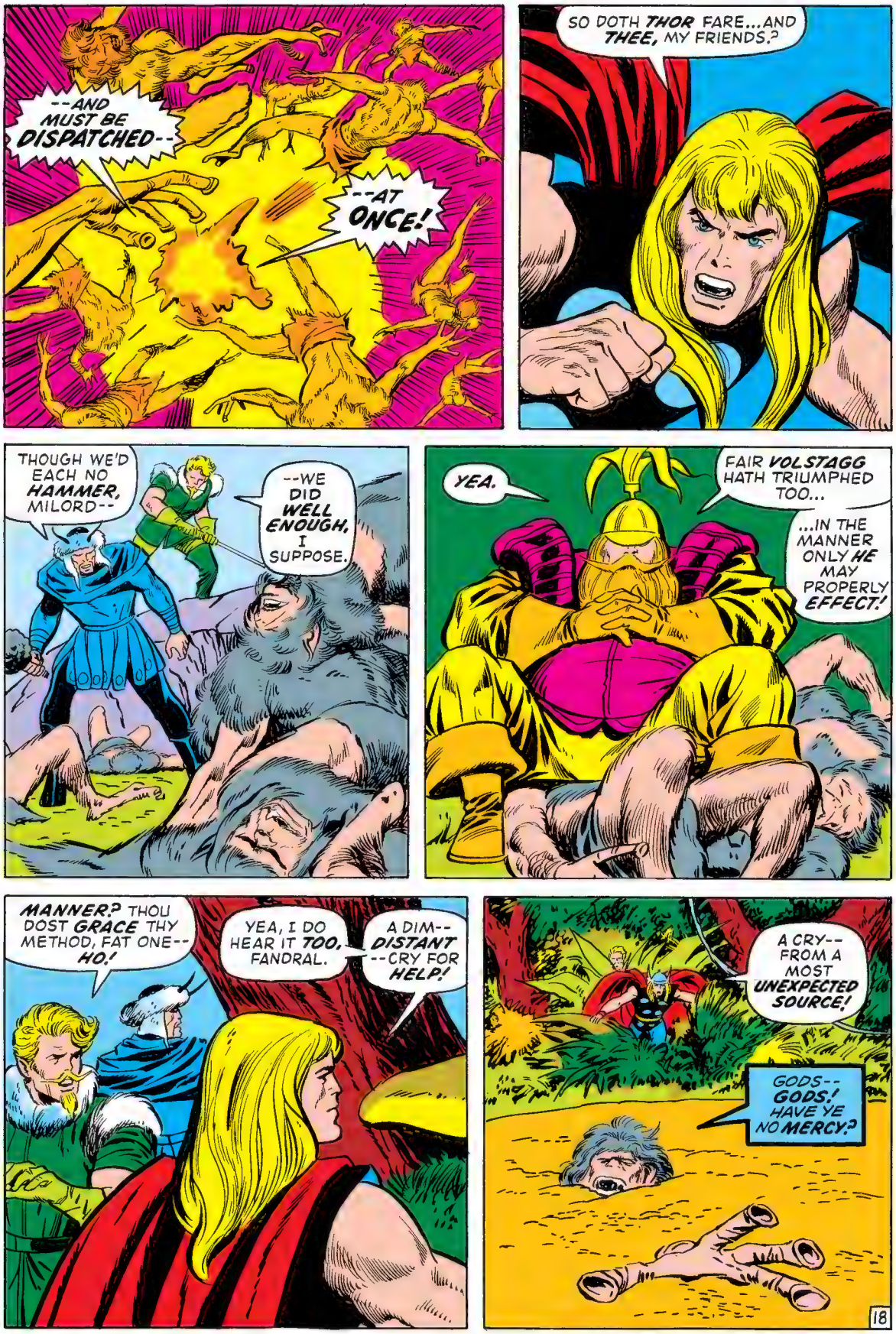

"WORDLESS NOW, THE TOWERING CREATURE DOTH TAKE HIS LEAVE OF ANGUISHED LOKI...
"...AND WHERE HE STEPS, THE WORLD DOTH TREMBLE... AND HEAVE.

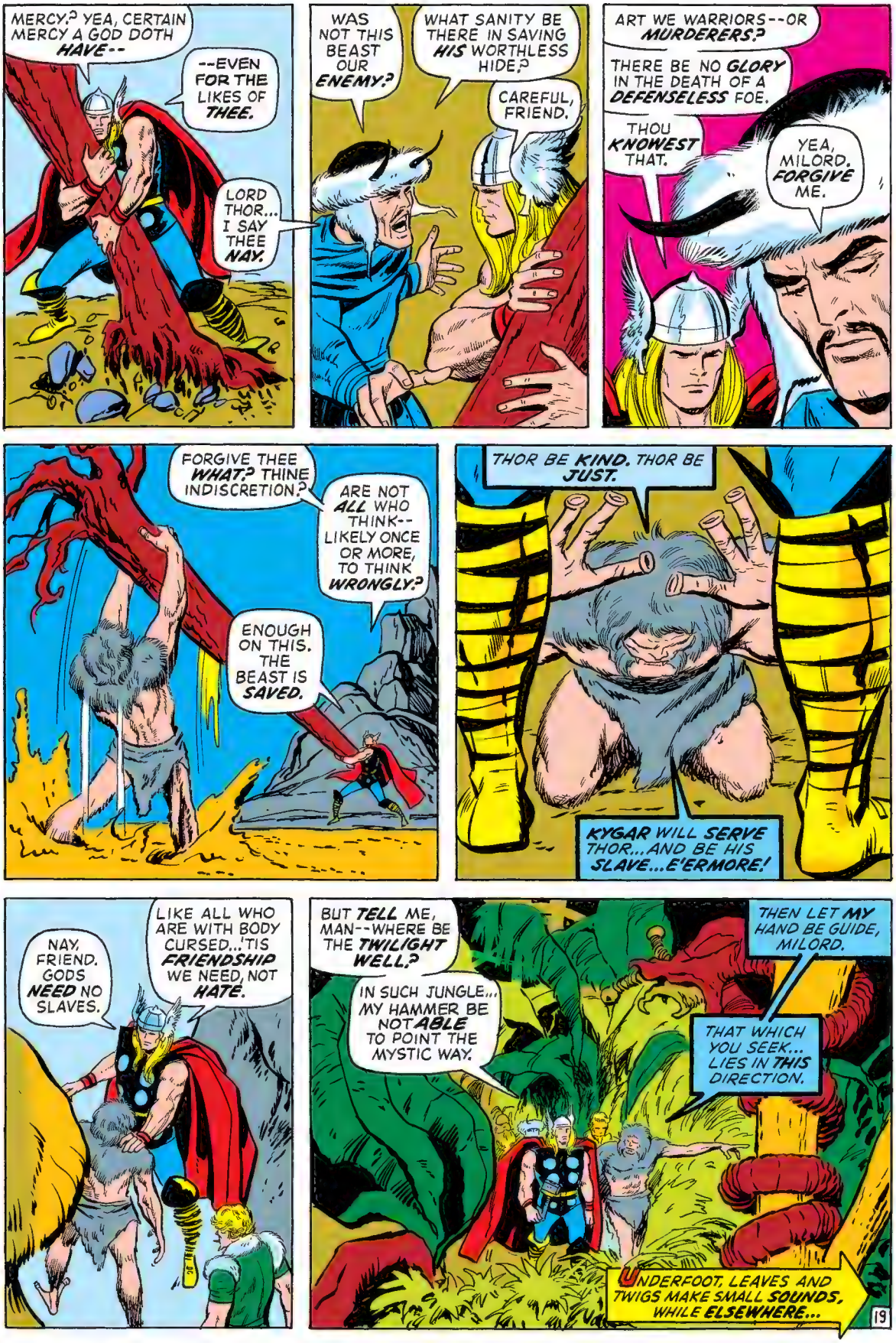

YEA, I KNOW THY QUESTIONS.
MANGOG SURVIVED--EVEN AFTER THE NEED WHICH FORMED HIM--VANISHED.
FOR...HIS BE A MOST PERSISTENT EVIL...
...ONE THAT MUST NEEDS EXIST, AFTER A TIME...OF ITS OWN WILL.
I COULD BUT IMPRISON HIM... AND LOKI HATH SET HIM FREE.
MILORD, SAY NO MORE.
AYE. TO THE DEATH--
--FOR ASGARRRRD!
--WE FIGHT FOR ODIN--
...BLISTERS LARGER THAN MY VERY TOES.
HO, FRIENDS--ARE WE NOT NEAR OUR DESTINATION--YET?
LEST THOR DEMANDS ...WE PUSH ON?
NEAR ENOUGH FOR A REST, I SUPPOSE.
NAY, FRIEND HOGUN--
--THE SON OF ODIN HATH ANOTHER PLAN...!
14

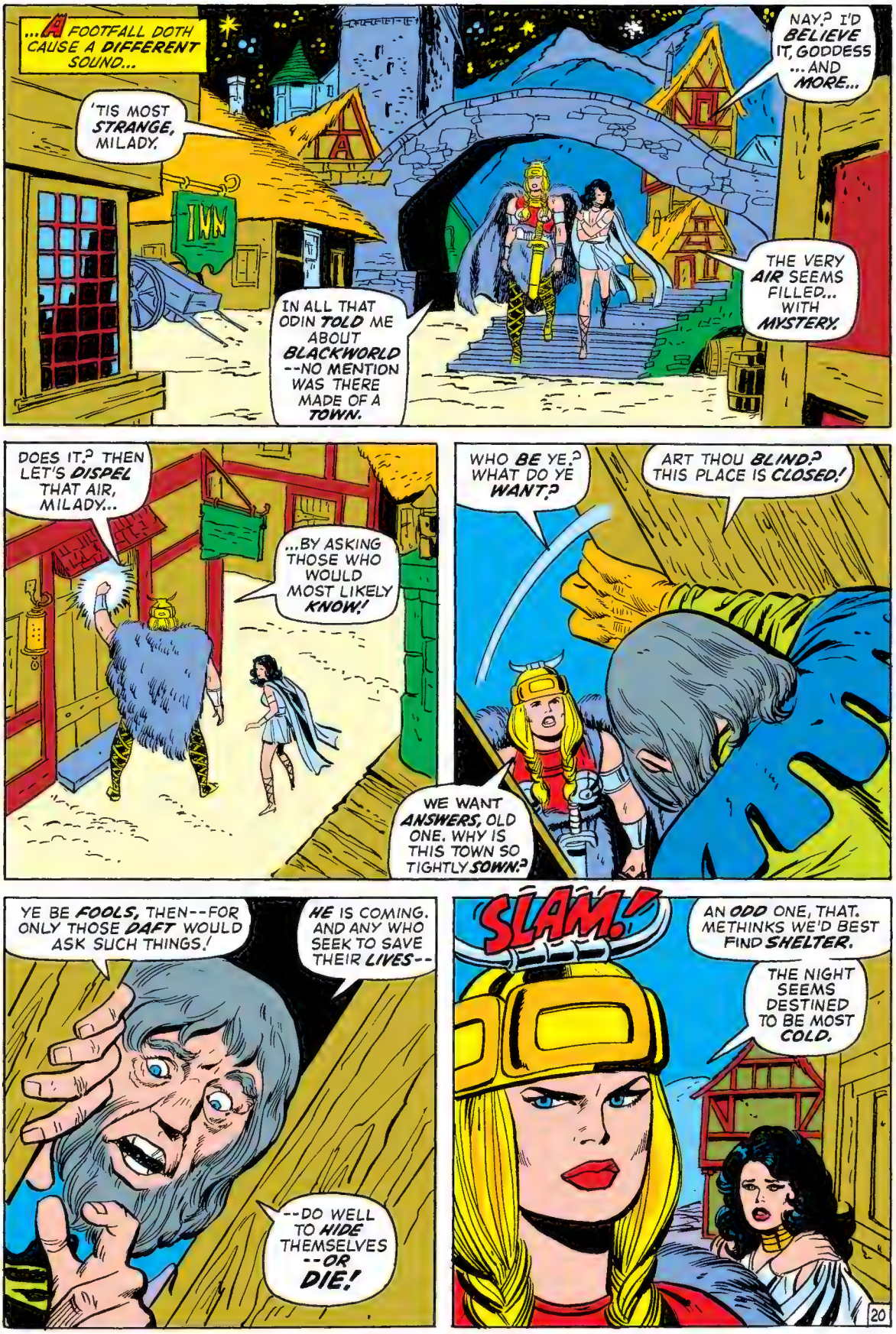

YONDER DOTH FEED THE WILD YRRL-BEASTS.
MAKE THEM OUR SLAVES--
--AND WEARY VOLSTAGG SHALL FIND HIMSELF A STEED!
WISE, MILORD--
--AND HOGUN BE THE GOD-- TO DO IT!
SEE HOW THEY DO DANCE?
THOU HAST DOWNED THEM, GRIM ONE--
WHAT MATTER THEIR PETTY STRUGGLES?
ARE NOT THEY ALL BUT TOYS--
--IN THESE, OUR GODLIKE HANDS?
HO, LONG-BEAST-- HO!
TOYS OR NOT-- THEY'VE TEMPERS, FOR SURE.

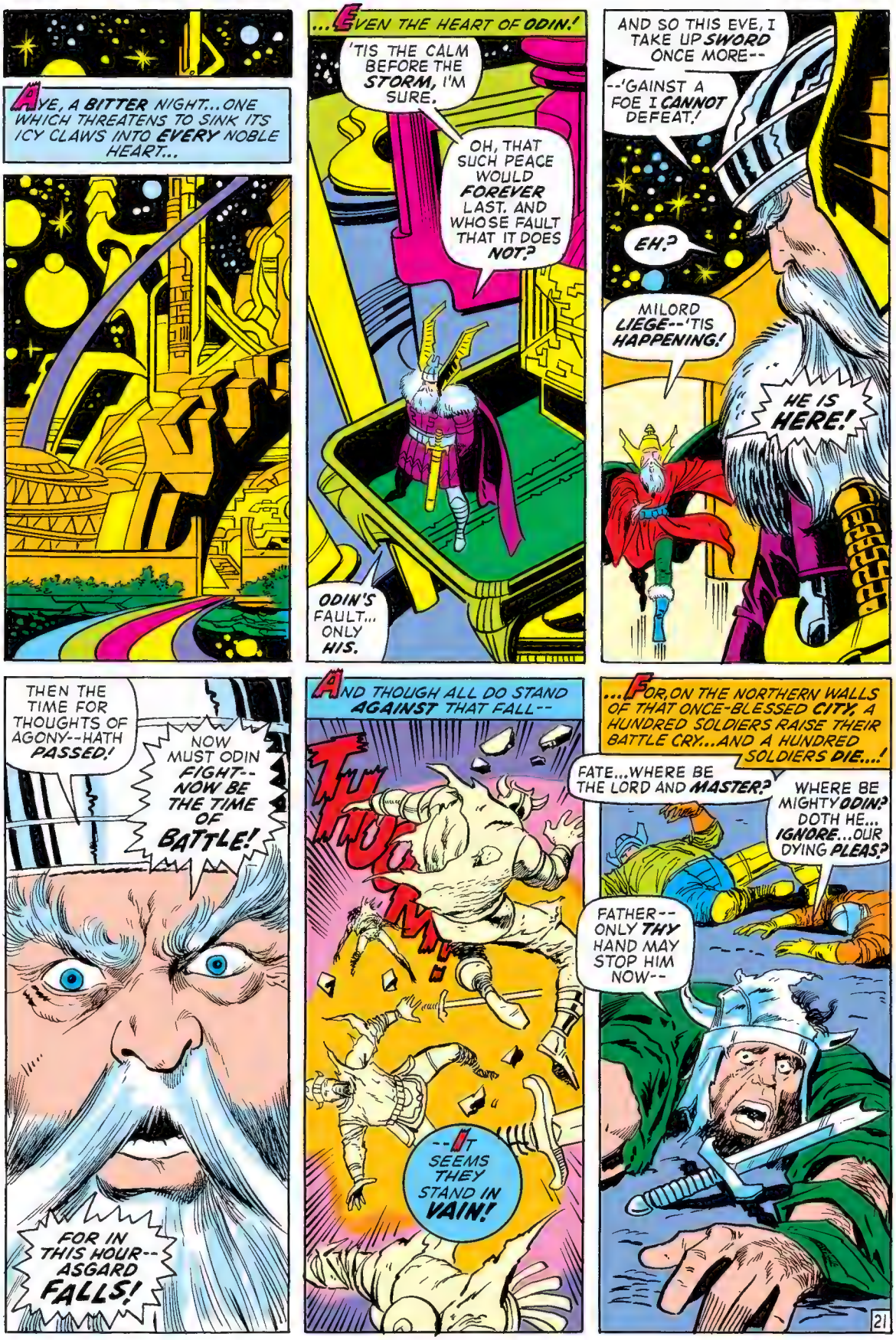

CALM THYSELF, FANDRAL. SUCH EFFORTS WILL BUT EXHAUST THEE.
THESE ARE DOCILE BEASTS, FOR SURE--
--OR ART THOU BLIND TO THAT, MY FRIEND?
BLIND, MILORD? NAY...
...ONLY SORE, MILORD... ONLY SORE.
WITHIN THE SEAGREEN FOREST, THE SHADOWS DO GROW THICKER...
...AND FOR HOURS, THE FOUR DO RIDE THROUGH THOSE SHADOWS...
...UNTIL ONE SUCH SHADOW... MOVES.
ZYGAR--LOOK THEE DOWN, TREE-CRAWLER.
'TIS AS I ALWAYS TELL THEE--
--THE FOOLISH ONES-- EVER RIDE BELOW!
AYE! AND THESE BE THE MOST FOOLISH ONES OF ALL!
WHAT--?
FANDRAL! HOGUN!
WE ARE ATTACKED-- BY TROLLS!
16


ART SURE, MY LORD--?
HOW DIDST THOU EVER GUESS?
WAK!
CAREFUL, HOGUN--MUST THOU ALWAYS BE SO SOMBER?
THINK THIS BUT THE CLEANEST OF SPORTS--
AIEEE! THIS ONE MOVES LIKE A DANCER--!
--FOR THOSE WE ATTACK--
--ARE ANYTHING BUT SPARRING PARTNERS--
AYE, FRIEND HOGUN?
SWAK!
AYE, FRIEND FANDRAL!
THE FIGHT DOTH GO STRANGELY, BROTHERS--
THE OTHERS STRUGGLE LIKE MADMEN--
YET--THIS ONE FIGHTS BY SITTING DOWN!
AND WHAT--MORE NOBLE--THAN THIS?
THOU DOST SPEAK RIGHTLY, VOLSTAGG--
THESE BUGS DO ANNOY ME--


--AND MUST BE DISPATCHED--
--AT ONCE!
SO DOTH THOR FARE...AND THEE, MY FRIENDS.?
THOUGH WE'D EACH NO HAMMER, MILORD--
--WE DID WELL ENOUGH, I SUPPOSE.
YEA.
FAIR VOLSTAGG HATH TRIUMPHED TOO...
...IN THE MANNER ONLY HE MAY PROPERLY EFFECT!
MANNER? THOU DOST GRACE THY METHOD, FAT ONE-- HO!
YEA, I DO HEAR IT TOO, FANDRAL.
A DIM-- DISTANT --CRY FOR HELP!
A CRY-- FROM A MOST UNEXPECTED SOURCE!
GODS-- GODS! HAVE YE NO MERCY?
18


MERCY.? YEA, CERTAIN MERCY A GOD DOTH HAVE--
--EVEN FOR THE LIKES OF THEE.
LORD THOR... I SAY THEE NAY.
WAS NOT THIS BEAST OUR ENEMY.?
WHAT SANITY BE THERE IN SAVING HIS WORTHLESS HIDE?
CAREFUL, FRIEND.
ART WE WARRIORS--OR MURDERERS.?
THERE BE NO GLORY IN THE DEATH OF A DEFENSELESS FOE.
THOU KNOWEST THAT.
YEA, MILORD. FORGIVE ME.
FORGIVE THEE WHAT.? THINE INDISCRETION.?
ARE NOT ALL WHO THINK-- LIKELY ONCE OR MORE, TO THINK WRONGLY.?
ENOUGH ON THIS. THE BEAST IS SAVED.
THOR BE KIND. THOR BE JUST.
KYGAR WILL SERVE THOR...AND BE HIS SLAVE...E'ERMORE!
NAY, FRIEND. GODS NEED NO SLAVES.
LIKE ALL WHO ARE WITH BODY CURSED...'TIS FRIENDSHIP WE NEED, NOT HATE.
BUT TELL ME, MAN--WHERE BE THE TWILIGHT WELL.?
IN SUCH JUNGLE... MY HAMMER BE NOT ABLE TO POINT THE MYSTIC WAY.
THEN LET MY HAND BE GUIDE, MILORD.
THAT WHICH YOU SEEK... LIES IN THIS DIRECTION.
UNDERFOOT, LEAVES AND TWIGS MAKE SMALL SOUNDS, WHILE ELSEWHERE...
19


...A FOOTFALL DOTH CAUSE A DIFFERENT SOUND...
'TIS MOST STRANGE, MILADY.
INN
IN ALL THAT ODIN TOLD ME ABOUT BLACKWORLD --NO MENTION WAS THERE MADE OF A TOWN.
THE VERY AIR SEEMS FILLED... WITH MYSTERY.
NAY.? I'D BELIEVE IT, GODDESS ...AND MORE...
DOES IT.? THEN LET'S DISPEL THAT AIR, MILADY...
...BY ASKING THOSE WHO WOULD MOST LIKELY KNOW!
WHO BE YE.? WHAT DO YE WANT.?
ART THOU BLIND.? THIS PLACE IS CLOSED!
WE WANT ANSWERS, OLD ONE. WHY IS THIS TOWN SO TIGHTLY SOWN.?
YE BE FOOLS, THEN--FOR ONLY THOSE DAFT WOULD ASK SUCH THINGS!
HE IS COMING. AND ANY WHO SEEK TO SAVE THEIR LIVES--
--DO WELL TO HIDE THEMSELVES --OR DIE!
SLAM!
AN ODD ONE, THAT. METHINKS WE'D BEST FIND SHELTER.
THE NIGHT SEEMS DESTINED TO BE MOST COLD.


AYE, A BITTER NIGHT...ONE WHICH THREATENS TO SINK ITS ICY CLAWS INTO EVERY NOBLE HEART...
...EVEN THE HEART OF ODIN!
'TIS THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM, I'M SURE.
OH, THAT SUCH PEACE WOULD FOREVER LAST. AND WHOSE FAULT THAT IT DOES NOT?
ODIN'S FAULT... ONLY HIS.
AND SO THIS EVE, I TAKE UP SWORD ONCE MORE--
--'GAINST A FOE I CANNOT DEFEAT.'
EH?
MILORD LIEGE--'TIS HAPPENING!
HE IS HERE!
THEN THE TIME FOR THOUGHTS OF AGONY--HATH PASSED!
NOW MUST ODIN FIGHT-- NOW BE THE TIME OF BATTLE!
FOR IN THIS HOUR-- ASGARD FALLS!
AND THOUGH ALL DO STAND AGAINST THAT FALL--
THUNK!
--IT SEEMS THEY STAND IN VAIN!
...FOR, ON THE NORTHERN WALLS OF THAT ONCE-BLESSED CITY, A HUNDRED SOLDIERS RAISE THEIR BATTLE CRY...AND A HUNDRED SOLDIERS DIE...!
FATE...WHERE BE THE LORD AND MASTER?
WHERE BE MIGHTY ODIN? DOTH HE... IGNORE...OUR DYING PLEAS?
FATHER-- ONLY THY HAND MAY STOP HIM NOW--
21

...OR MANGOG REIGNS SUPREME!
THOOM!
NEXT ISSUE: WHEN ASGARD ENDS!

THOR
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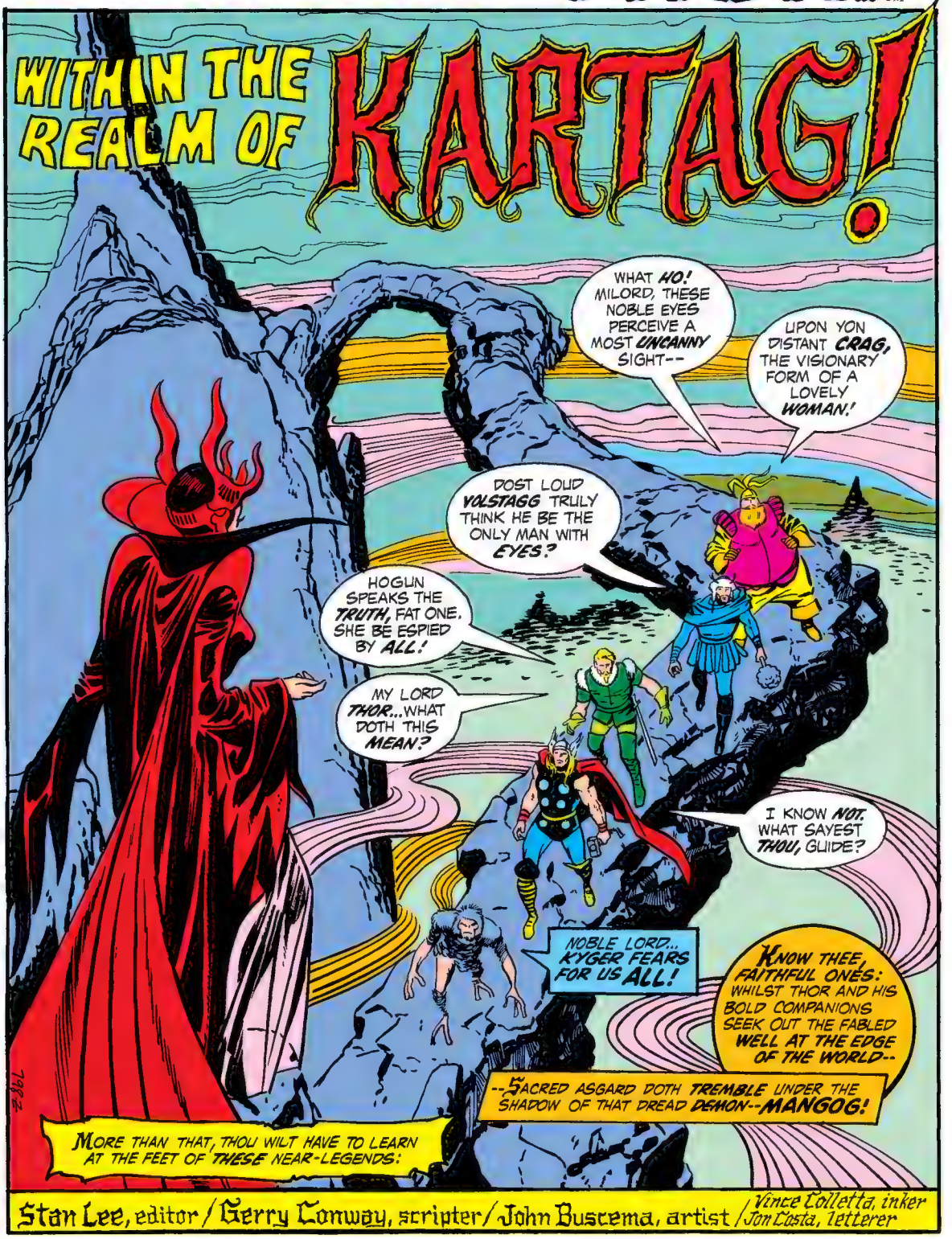
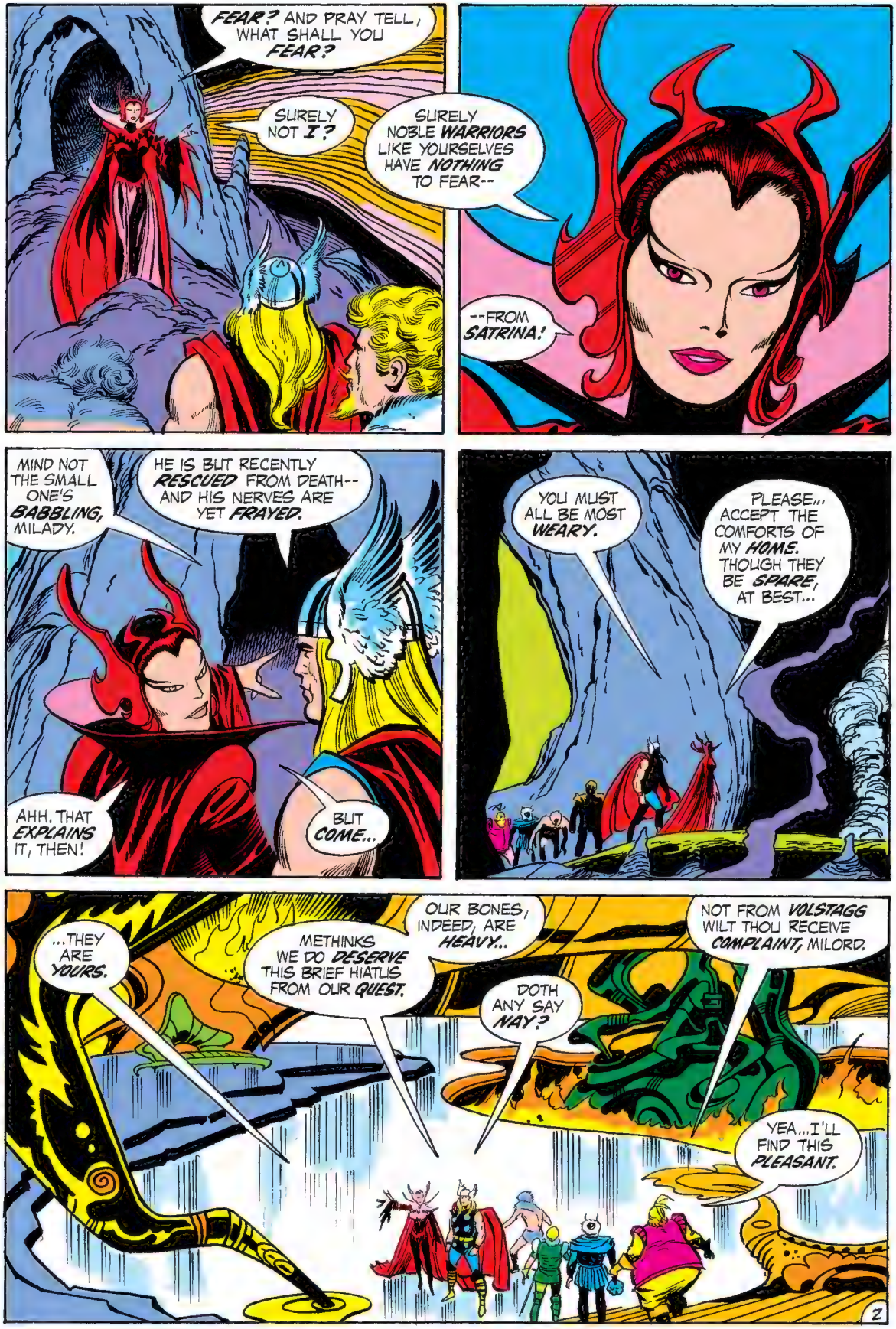
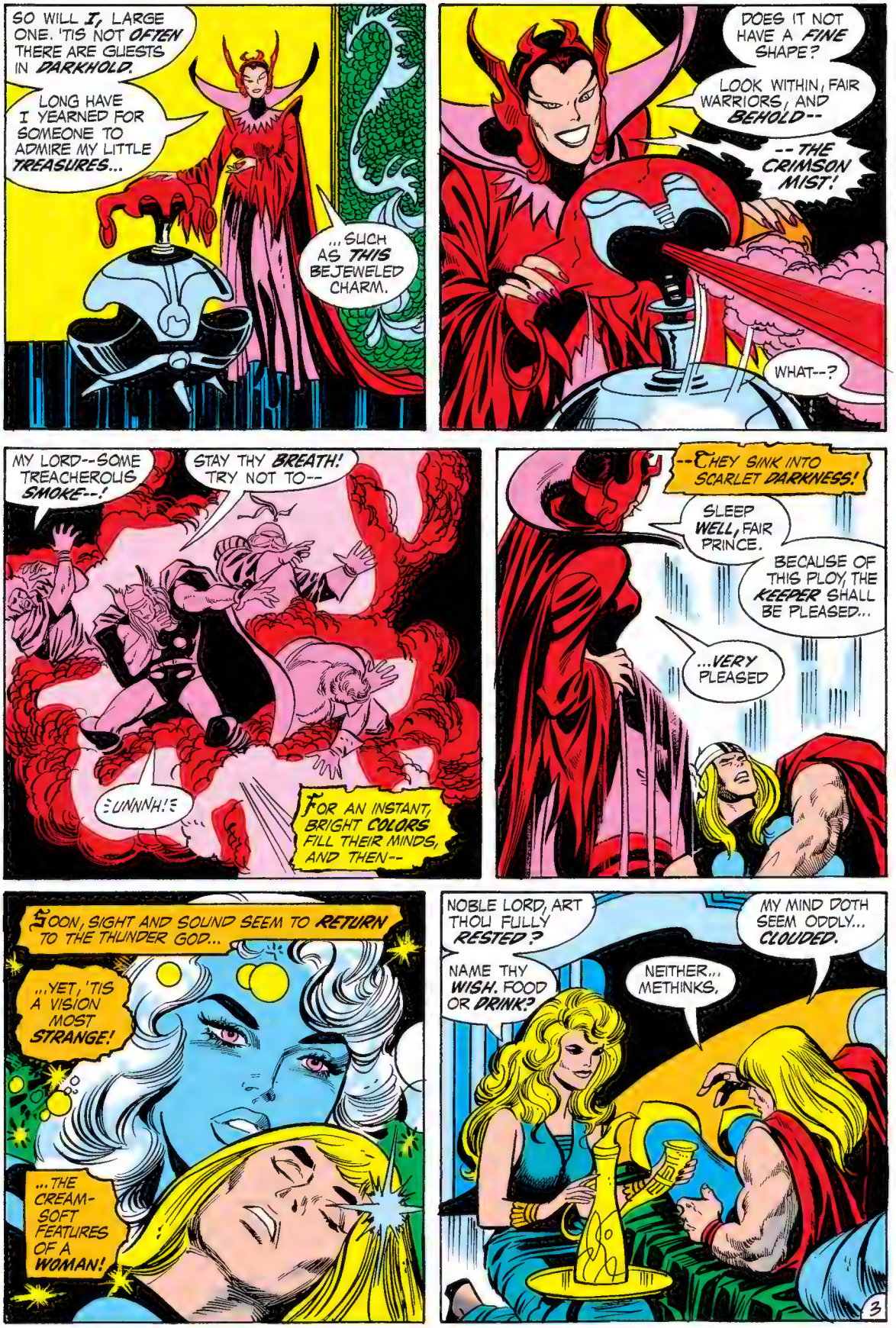
02450
THE MIGHTY
THOR
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
ASGARDIANS -- STAND YE BACK WHILST I DO BATTLE WITH KARTAG!
THOR STANDS OR FALLS ALONE!!
KARTAG--THE KEEPER!

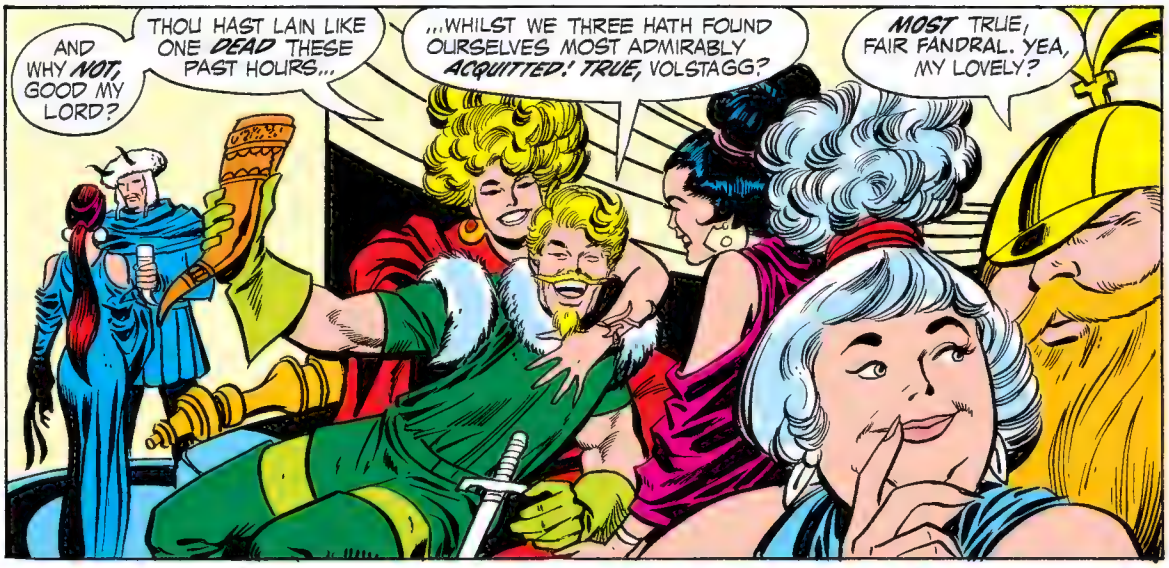
THE MIGHTY THOR!™

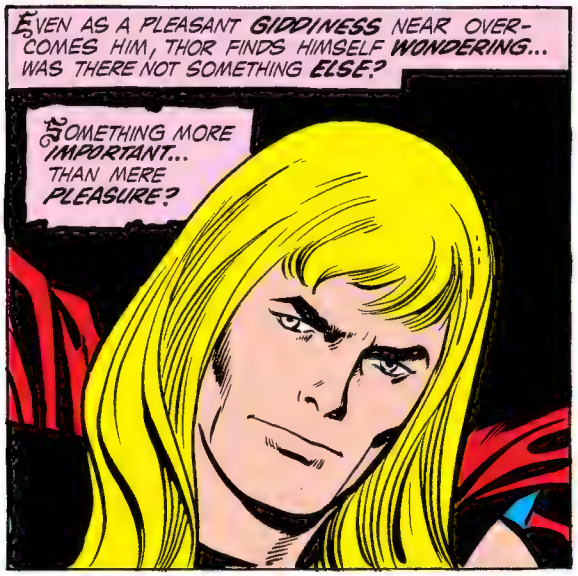

WITHIN THE REALM OF KARTAG!
WHAT HO! MILORD, THESE NOBLE EYES PERCEIVE A MOST UNCANNY SIGHT--
UPON YON DISTANT CRAG, THE VISIONARY FORM OF A LOVELY WOMAN!
DOST LOUD VOLSTAGG TRULY THINK HE BE THE ONLY MAN WITH EYES?
HOGUN SPEAKS THE TRUTH, FAT ONE. SHE BE ESPIED BY ALL!
MY LORD THOR...WHAT DOTH THIS MEAN?
I KNOW NOT WHAT SAYEST THOU, GUIDE?
NOBLE LORD.. KYGER FEARS FOR US ALL!
KNOW THEE, FAITHFUL ONES: WHILST THOR AND HIS BOLD COMPANIONS SEEK OUT THE FABLED WELL AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD--
--SACRED ASGARD DOTH TREMBLE UNDER THE SHADOW OF THAT DREAD DEMON--MANGOG!
MORE THAN THAT, THOU WILT HAVE TO LEARN AT THE FEET OF THESE NEAR-LEGENDS:

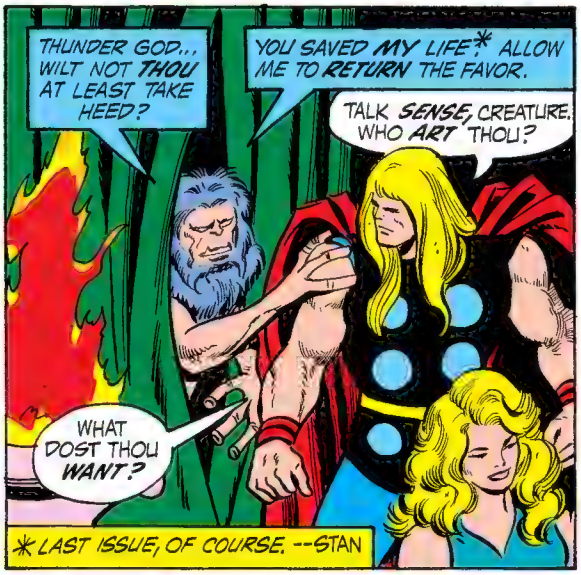
Stan Lee, editor / Gerry Conway, scripter / John Buscema, artist / Vince Colletta, inker / Jon Costa, letterer


FEAR? AND PRAY TELL, WHAT SHALL YOU FEAR?
SURELY NOT I?
SURELY NOBLE WARRIORS LIKE YOURSELVES HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR--
--FROM SATRINA!
MIND NOT THE SMALL ONE'S BABBLING, MILADY.
HE IS BUT RECENTLY RESCUED FROM DEATH-- AND HIS NERVES ARE YET FRAYED.
AHH. THAT EXPLAINS IT, THEN!
BUT COME...
YOU MUST ALL BE MOST WEARY.
PLEASE,,, ACCEPT THE COMFORTS OF MY HOME. THOUGH THEY BE SPARE, AT BEST...
...THEY ARE YOURS.
METHINKS WE DO DESERVE THIS BRIEF HIATUS FROM OUR QUEST.
OUR BONES, INDEED, ARE HEAVY...
DOTH ANY SAY NAY?
NOT FROM VOLSTAGG WILT THOU RECEIVE COMPLAINT, MILORD.
YEA...I'LL FIND THIS PLEASANT.
2


SO WILL I, LARGE ONE. 'TIS NOT OFTEN THERE ARE GUESTS IN DARKHOLD.
LONG HAVE I YEARNED FOR SOMEONE TO ADMIRE MY LITTLE TREASURES...
...SUCH AS THIS BEJEWELED CHARM.
DOES IT NOT HAVE A FINE SHAPE?
LOOK WITHIN, FAIR WARRIORS, AND BEHOLD--
--THE CRIMSON MIST!
WHAT--?
MY LORD--SOME TREACHEROUS SMOKE--!
STAY THY BREATH! TRY NOT TO--
UNNNH!
FOR AN INSTANT, BRIGHT COLORS FILL THEIR MINDS, AND THEN--
--THEY SINK INTO SCARLET DARKNESS!
SLEEP WELL, FAIR PRINCE.
BECAUSE OF THIS PLOY, THE KEEPER SHALL BE PLEASED...
...VERY PLEASED
SOON, SIGHT AND SOUND SEEM TO RETURN TO THE THUNDER GOD...
...YET, 'TIS A VISION MOST STRANGE!
...THE CREAM-SOFT FEATURES OF A WOMAN!
NOBLE LORD, ART THOU FULLY RESTED?
NAME THY WISH. FOOD OR DRINK?
NEITHER... METHINKS.
MY MIND DOTH SEEM ODDLY... CLOUDED.
3

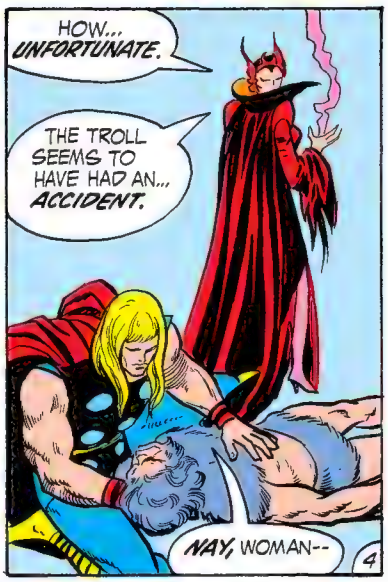

AND WHY NOT, GOOD MY LORD?
THOU HAST LAIN LIKE ONE DEAD THESE PAST HOURS...
...WHILST WE THREE HATH FOUND OURSELVES MOST ADMIRABLY ACQUITTED! TRUE, VOLSTAGG?
MOST TRUE, FAIR FANDRAL. YEA, MY LOVELY?


EVEN AS A PLEASANT GIDDINESS NEAR OVERCOMES HIM, THOR FINDS HIMSELF WONDERING... WAS THERE NOT SOMETHING ELSE?
SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT... THAN MERE PLEASURE?


THUNDER GOD... WILT NOT THOU AT LEAST TAKE HEED?
YOU SAVED MY LIFE!* ALLOW ME TO RETURN THE FAVOR.
TALK SENSE, CREATURE, WHO ART THOU?
WHAT DOST THOU WANT?
*LAST ISSUE, OF COURSE. --STAN

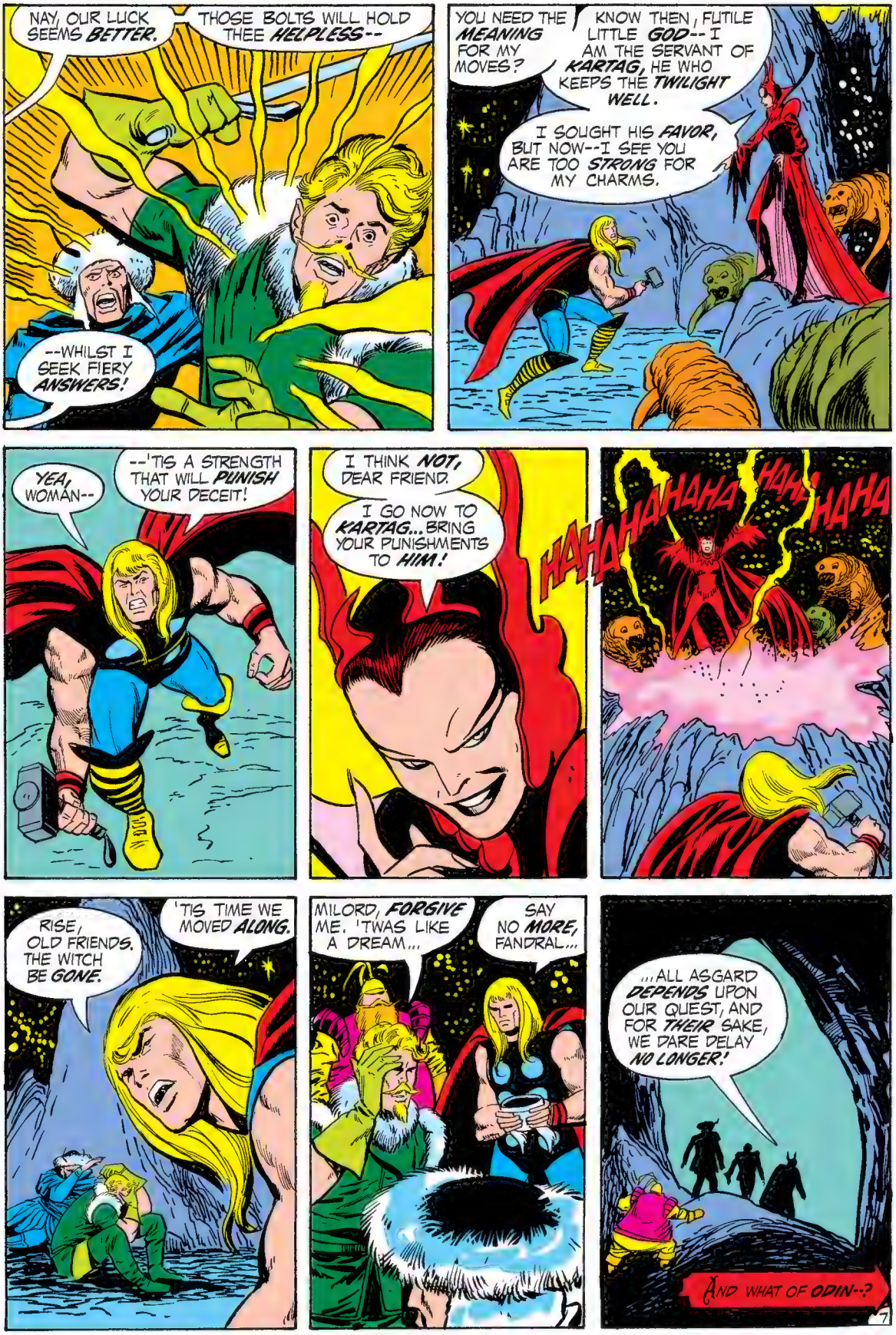
SHE'S SLAVED YOU WITH A SPELL, THUNDER GOD.
BELIEVE THIS ONE WHO CANNOT BE BLINDED--

--ALL IS NOT WHAT IT SEEEEEMMSSS--
ZRK
ZK

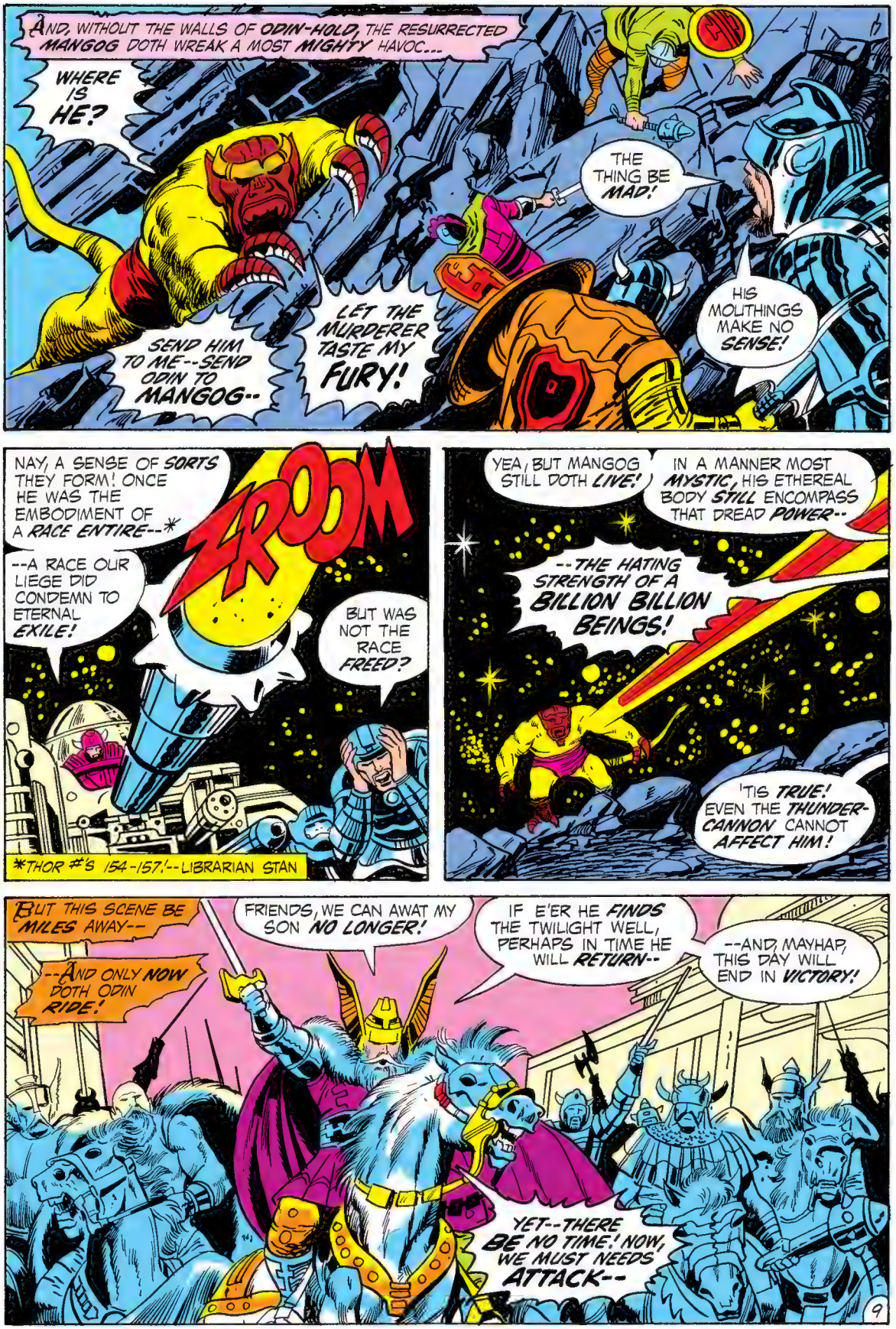

HOW... UNFORTUNATE.
THE TROLL SEEMS TO HAVE HAD AN... ACCIDENT.
NAY, WOMAN--
4

--THESE EYES ARE OPEN, NOW!
I KNOW NOT WHY THOU HAST SOUGHT TO THWART OUR SEARCH FOR THE WELL AT WORLD'S EDGE--
--NOR DO I TRULY CARE.
FOR THE DEATH OF THAT DEFENSELESS ONE, AND FOR OTHER SINS--
--I'LL SEE YOU BURN IN--
--NO!
I SEE WHAT MINE EYES BEFORE SAW NOT!
THOSE MAIDENS FAIR WHOSE ARMS WE DID CARESS--
--ARE MONSTERS!
DEMONS TRUE!
NAY!
NOT SO SHALL WE END--LIED TO BY OUR VERY SENSES!
THESE THINGS MUST DIE!
ART MAD, THOR?
'TWAS A LADY THOU HAST STRUCK--
5

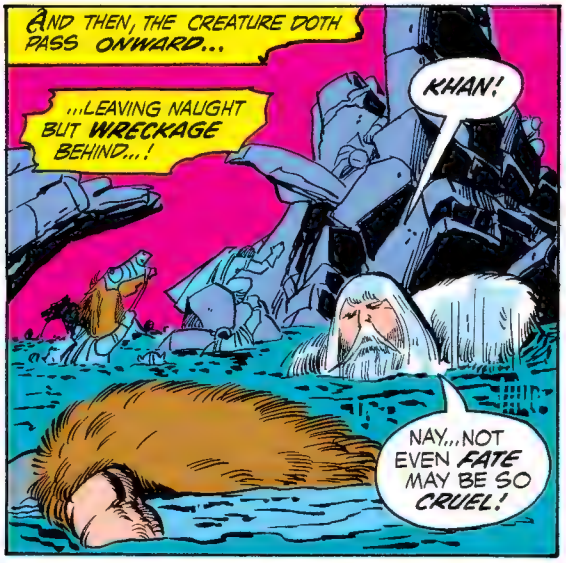
--AND FANDRAL STRIKES IN TURN!
NAY, THOU DOST NOT UNDERSTAND!
I KNOW ENOUGH!
THY WILL BE SAPPED, FOOL.
THE WOMAN CONTROLS THY MIND!
WOMAN? WHAT WOMAN? THOU SPEAKEST MADNESS!
WHACK
--AND NOW SHALT SPEAK NO MORE!
EXCELLENT! EXCELLENT!
--FIGHT THUS AMONG YOURSELVES. MY BELOVED KARTAG WILL FIND THIS MOST AMUSING.
...AND PERHAPS WILL LOOK MORE FAVORABLY UPON SHE WHO SEEKS THE BLESSING OF THE WELL!
FRIENDS, ART THOU TRULY DEAF TO HER VENOMOUS WORDS?
SHE PLOTS OUR DEATHS!
THOUGH IT PAINS MY VERY SOUL--
--TO SAVE THEE, MUST I KILL THEE?

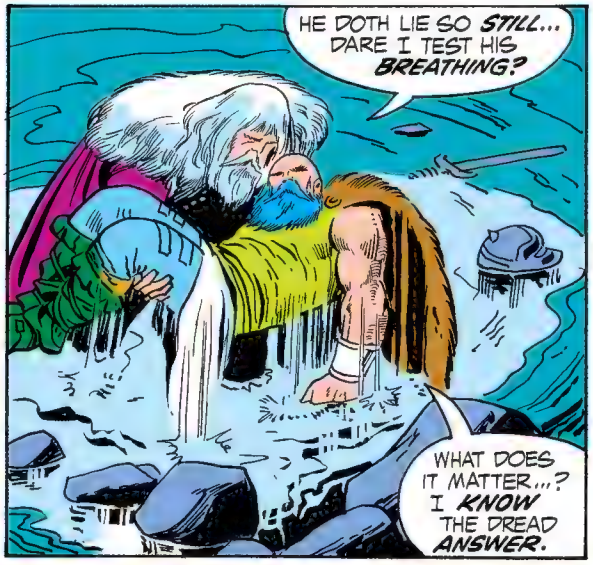

NAY, OUR LUCK SEEMS BETTER.
THOSE BOLTS WILL HOLD THEE HELPLESS--
--WHILST I SEEK FIERY ANSWERS!
YOU NEED THE MEANING FOR MY MOVES?
KNOW THEN, FUTILE LITTLE GOD-- I AM THE SERVANT OF KARTAG, HE WHO KEEPS THE TWILIGHT WELL.
I SOUGHT HIS FAVOR, BUT NOW--I SEE YOU ARE TOO STRONG FOR MY CHARMS.
YEA, WOMAN--
--'TIS A STRENGTH THAT WILL PUNISH YOUR DECEIT!
I THINK NOT, DEAR FRIEND.
I GO NOW TO KARTAG... BRING YOUR PUNISHMENTS TO HIM!
HAHAHAHAHA
HAHAHAHAHA
RISE, OLD FRIENDS. THE WITCH BE GONE.
'TIS TIME WE MOVED ALONG.
MILORD, FORGIVE ME. 'TWAS LIKE A DREAM...
SAY NO MORE, FANDRAL...
...ALL ASGARD DEPENDS UPON OUR QUEST, AND FOR THEIR SAKE, WE DARE DELAY NO LONGER!
AND WHAT OF ODIN--?

WHAT OF THE ALL-FATHER?
MY MEN DOTH AWAIT MY WORD. YET...WHAT WORD SHALL IT BE?
THIS BATTLE SEEMS TRULY DOOMED...
...AND SO, WHAT MAY ODIN SAY?
PERHAPS THE TRUTH WILL DO, MILORD.
SHOULD NOT THE LOST KNOW THEIR STAR-CROSSED FATE?
WHO DARES--? YOU!
WHAT MEANS THIS INTRUSION, DARK ONE?
WHY, MILORD... HELA DOTH GO WHERE HELA DOTH PLEASE!
WHAT PLACE BE THERE--WHERE THE GODDESS OF DEATH MAY NOT WALK?
THOU DOST GROW BOLDER, NIGHT QUEEN...
...PERHAPS A BLACK SECRET BE THINE, AND THOU DOST SEEK TO MOCK ME WITH IT.
TELL ME, WOMAN--HOW DOTH FARE MY SON, THE NOBLE THOR?
'TIS A FUTILE QUEST YOU'VE SET HIM ON, ODIN.
YET... THOU KNOWEST THIS, DOST THOU NOT?
YEA, SO IT SEEMS! I BUT SOUGHT TO SAVE HIM.
ASGARD FIGHTS ITS FINAL BATTLE THIS DAY--AND, METHINKS, NONE SHALL SURVIVE!
FROM THIS THOU SENT HIM, MILORD?
THEN... THOU MUST ALSO KNOW, HE'LL NOT FORGIVE THEE FOR THIS UNSEEMING GIFT.
THINKEST THOU I BE BLIND?
GET THEE HENCE, NIGHT QUEEN--LEST MY POWER BE BY MY GRIEF PROVOKED!
8

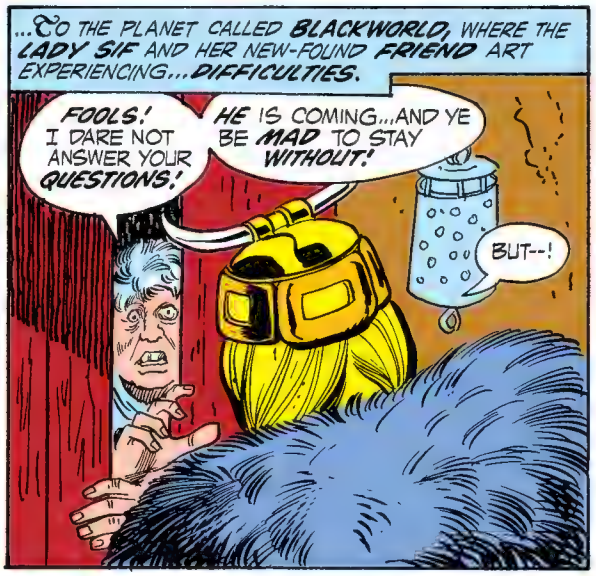

AND, WITHOUT THE WALLS OF ODIN-HOLD, THE RESURRECTED MANGOG DOTH WREAK A MOST MIGHTY HAVOC...
WHERE IS HE?
THE THING BE MAD!
HIS MOUTHINGS MAKE NO SENSE!
LET THE MURDERER TASTE MY FURY!
SEND HIM TO ME--SEND ODIN TO MANGOG--
NAY, A SENSE OF SORTS THEY FORM! ONCE HE WAS THE EMBODIMENT OF A RACE ENTIRE--*
--A RACE OUR LIEGE DID CONDEMN TO ETERNAL EXILE!
ZROOM
BUT WAS NOT THE RACE FREED?
*THOR #'S 154-157.'--LIBRARIAN STAN
YEA, BUT MANGOG STILL DOTH LIVE!
IN A MANNER MOST MYSTIC, HIS ETHEREAL BODY STILL ENCOMPASS THAT DREAD POWER--
--THE HATING STRENGTH OF A BILLION BILLION BEINGS!
'TIS TRUE! EVEN THE THUNDER-CANNON CANNOT AFFECT HIM!
BUT THIS SCENE BE MILES AWAY--
--AND ONLY NOW DOTH ODIN RIDE!
FRIENDS, WE CAN AWAT MY SON NO LONGER!
IF E'ER HE FINDS THE TWILIGHT WELL, PERHAPS IN TIME HE WILL RETURN--
--AND, MAYHAP, THIS DAY WILL END IN VICTORY!
YET--THERE BE NO TIME! NOW, WE MUST NEEDS ATTACK--
9

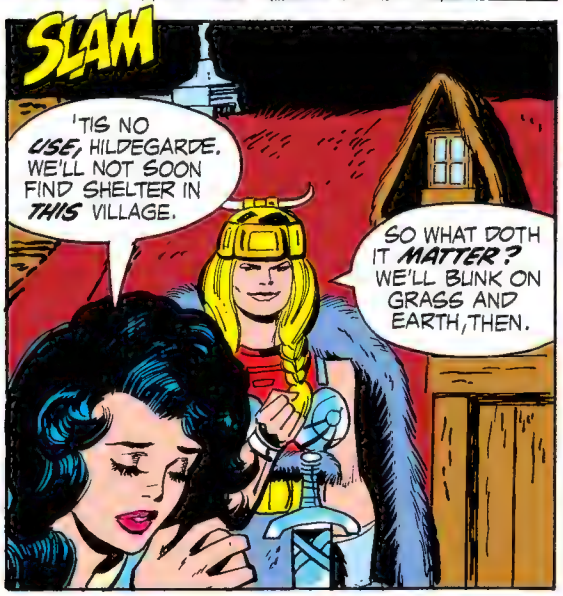
FOR ODIN--
--FOR ASGARRRRRODD!
VILLAIN, AT LAST YOUR FACE IS SEEN!
BUT SEEN ONLY FOR AN INSTANT, VILE GODLING--
CHROOM
--ONLY 'TILL YOU DIE!
BANDS OF MUSCLE RIPPLING CROSS STEEL-THEWED SHOULDERS, THE MANGOG HEAVES UPWARD--
--AND THE BRIDGE OF STONE BE TORN!
10

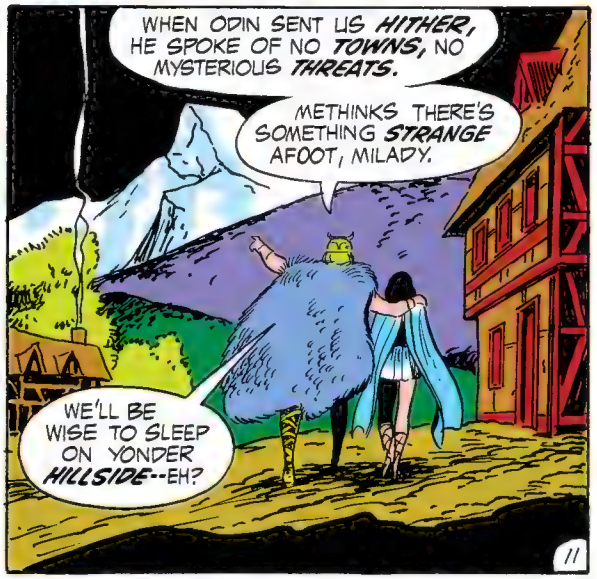

AND THEN, THE CREATURE DOTH PASS ONWARD...
...LEAVING NAUGHT BUT WRECKAGE BEHIND...!
KHAN!
NAY...NOT EVEN FATE MAY BE SO CRUEL!


HE DOTH LIE SO STILL... DARE I TEST HIS BREATHING?
WHAT DOES IT MATTER...? I KNOW THE DREAD ANSWER.

I KNOW...WHAT I MUST DO.
YET BEFORE WE HEAR ODIN'S FATEFUL WORDS, LET'S LOOK ELSE-WHERE...

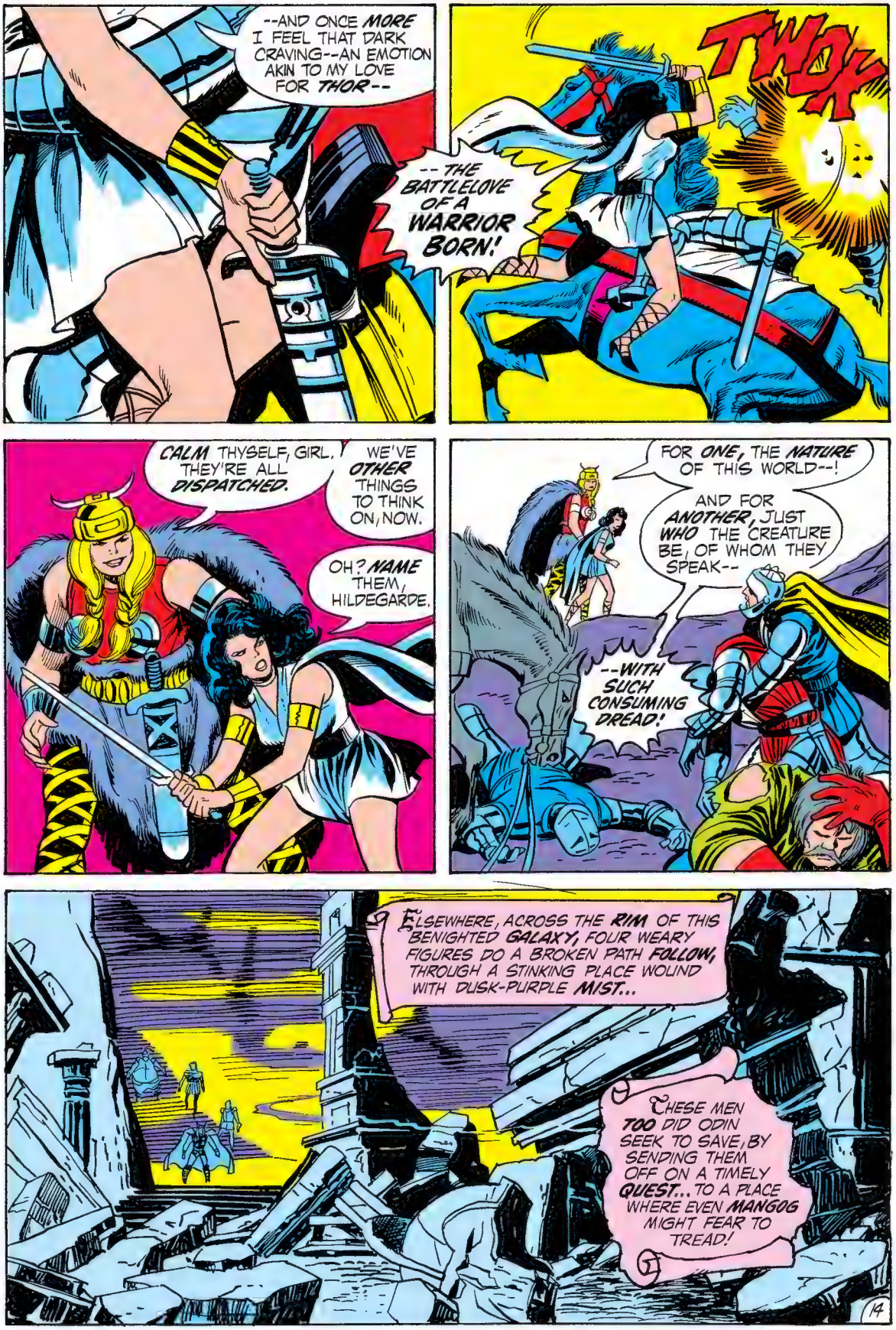

...TO THE PLANET CALLED BLACKWORLD, WHERE THE LADY SIF AND HER NEW-FOUND FRIEND ART EXPERIENCING...DIFFICULTIES.
FOOLS! I DARE NOT ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS!
HE IS COMING...AND YE BE MAD TO STAY WITHOUT!
BUT--!

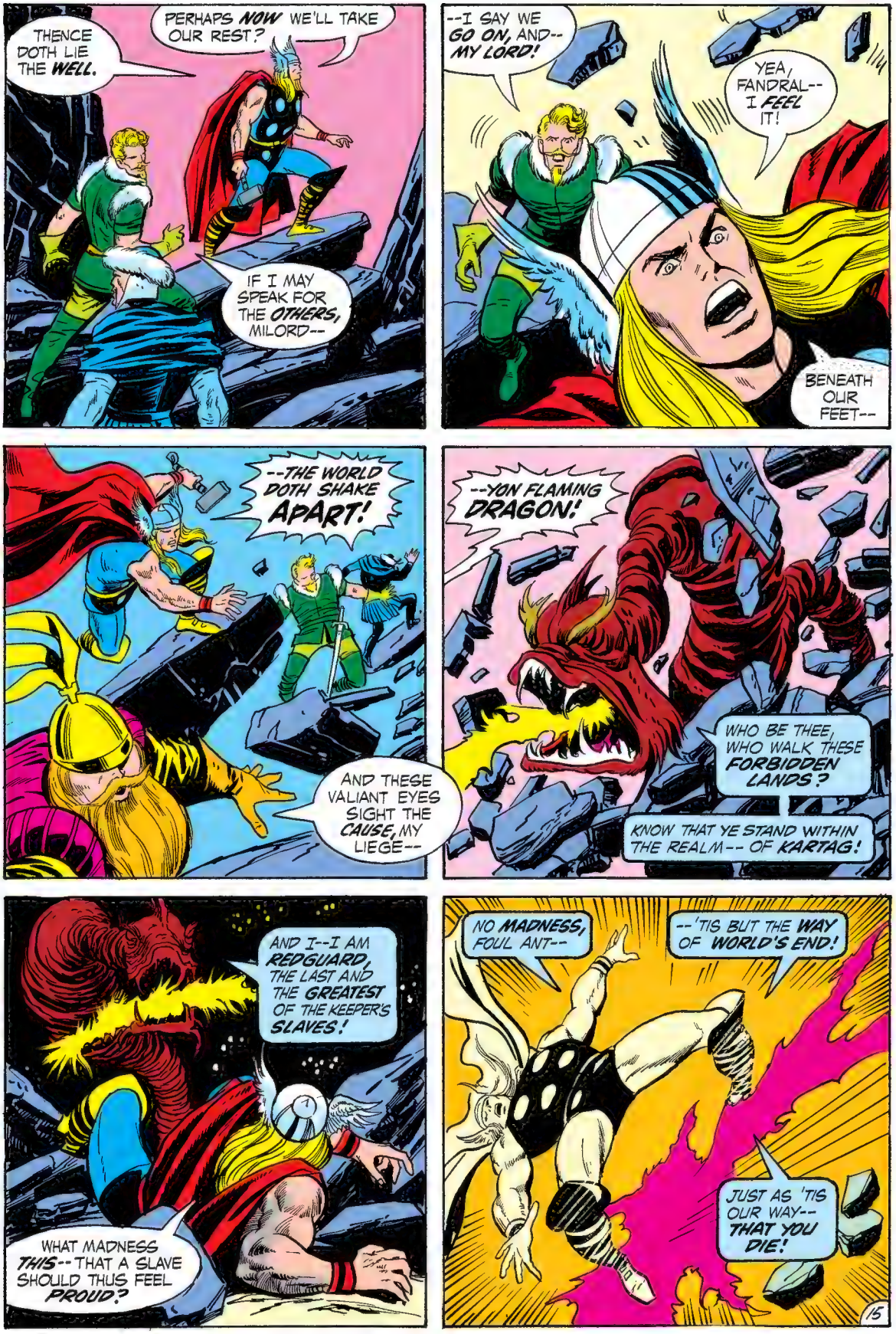

SLAM
'TIS NO USE, HILDEGARDE. WE'LL NOT SOON FIND SHELTER IN THIS VILLAGE.
SO WHAT DOTH IT MATTER? WE'LL BLINK ON GRASS AND EARTH, THEN.


WHEN ODIN SENT US HITHER, HE SPOKE OF NO TOWNS, NO MYSTERIOUS THREATS.
METHINKS THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE AFOOT, MILADY.
WE'LL BE WISE TO SLEEP ON YONDER HILLSIDE--EH?

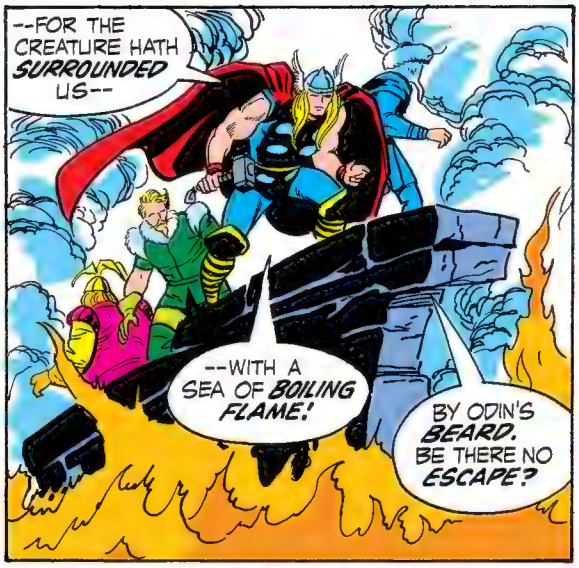
MILADY, BEHIND US--THERE DOTH COME A SOUND--!
HORSEMEN!
AYE! YE BE A FINE MORSEL, LASS!
FITTIN' TO BE SAVED FROM HIS CLUTCHES!
MY LADY!
BUT YEW, FAT ONE--
BEST YE DIE, FOR WE'LL NOT STEAL THE LIKES OF YEW!
A BATTLE, IS IT?
GOOD ENOUGH, THEN!
WHAT--?
THUNK
AIIIEEE! 'TIS A WITCH WE'VE FOUND--!
UNNNH!
A WITCH, SIR GLAYN?
WELL, THEN, LET'S SEE WHAT SHE DOES WITH STEEL--
12

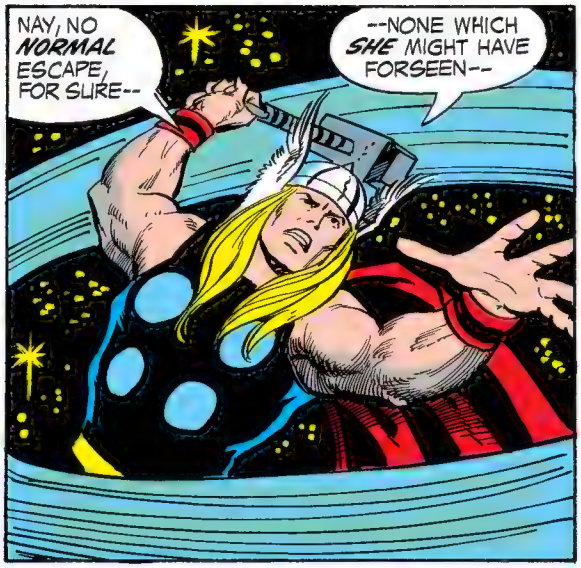
--WHEN IT'S PUT THROUGH 'ER 'EAD!
NO!
I LIKE THESE TYPES, MILADY. THEY COME FROM OUT OF NOWHERE--
--AND MOST GRACIOUSLY PROVIDE US--
--WITH FINE SPORT!
METHINKS HE DOTH PROTEST TOO MUCH.
IF ODIN THOUGHT TO PROTECT US, AS I'M SURE HE DID, HE MOST SURELY SEEMS TO HAVE FAILED IN THAT AIM--
--YEA, MILADY?
WHY WE'RE ON THIS BLIGHTED WORLD DOTH NOT CONCERN ME, HILDEGARDE--
--NAY, NOT NOW, AT ANY RATE!
THIS BATTLE HATH AWOKEN A FLAME WITHIN ME--
13

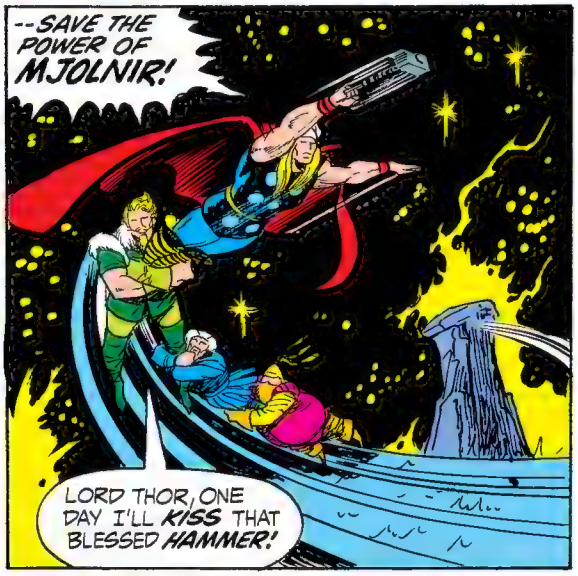

--AND ONCE MORE I FEEL THAT DARK CRAVING--AN EMOTION AKIN TO MY LOVE FOR THOR--
-- THE BATTLELOVE OF A WARRIOR BORN!
THWOK
CALM THYSELF, GIRL. THEY'RE ALL DISPATCHED.
WE'VE OTHER THINGS TO THINK ON, NOW.
OH? NAME THEM, HILDEGARDE.
FOR ONE, THE NATURE OF THIS WORLD--!
AND FOR ANOTHER, JUST WHO THE CREATURE BE, OF WHOM THEY SPEAK--
--WITH SUCH CONSUMING DREAD!
ELSEWHERE, ACROSS THE RIM OF THIS BENIGHTED GALAXY, FOUR WEARY FIGURES DO A BROKEN PATH FOLLOW, THROUGH A STINKING PLACE WOUND WITH DUSK-PURPLE MIST...
THESE MEN TOO DID ODIN SEEK TO SAVE, BY SENDING THEM OFF ON A TIMELY QUEST... TO A PLACE WHERE EVEN MANGOG MIGHT FEAR TO TREAD!


THENCE DOTH LIE THE WELL.
PERHAPS NOW WE'LL TAKE OUR REST?
IF I MAY SPEAK FOR THE OTHERS, MILORD--
--I SAY WE GO ON, AND-- MY LORD!
YEA, FANDRAL-- I FEEL IT!
BENEATH OUR FEET--
--THE WORLD DOTH SHAKE APART!
AND THESE VALIANT EYES SIGHT THE CAUSE, MY LIEGE--
--YON FLAMING DRAGON!
WHO BE THEE, WHO WALK THESE FORBIDDEN LANDS?
KNOW THAT YE STAND WITHIN THE REALM-- OF KARTAG!
AND I--I AM REDGUARD, THE LAST AND THE GREATEST OF THE KEEPER'S SLAVES!
WHAT MADNESS THIS-- THAT A SLAVE SHOULD THUS FEEL PROUD?
NO MADNESS, FOUL ANT--
--'TIS BUT THE WAY OF WORLD'S END!
JUST AS 'TIS OUR WAY-- THAT YOU DIE!
15

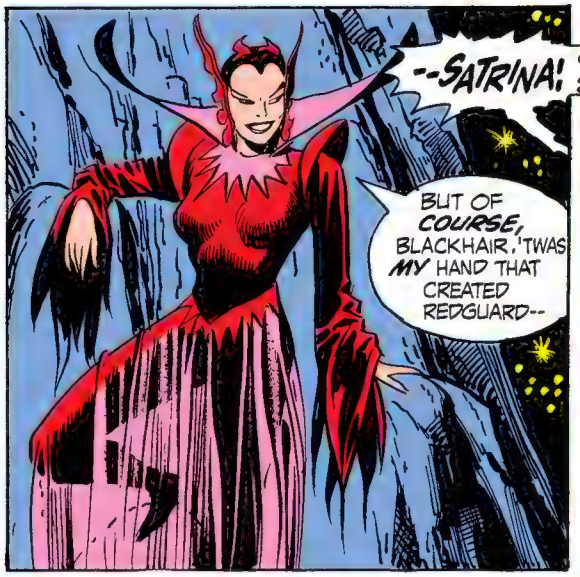
THOR FALLS! DEMON, THY NAME BE CURSED!
THEY'LL CALL THEE BY A DIFFERENT WORD--
--IN HADES!
NAY, GRIM ONE-- THOU DOST TAKE A FALSE APPROACH!
NOT EVEN THY MOST POWERFUL BLOW CANST SHATTER THAT STEALY HIDE
THOU DOST SPEAK THE TRUTH, PUNY ONE.
'TIS A GROSS PITY THOU SHAN'T LIVE TO SPEAK AGAIN!
WHAT INSANITY THIS, THAT MONSTERS TALK--
--AND BRAVE MEN FALL BENEATH FOUL AND FETID BREATH?
FRIEND HOGUN, HAST THOU NOT YET GUESSED?
WE'VE EACH OUR MOST BITTER FANTASIES--
--AND THAT CREATURE DOTH SEEM, INDEED, TO EMBODY THEM ALL!
BUT VOLSTAGG HATH NO MIDNIGHT DEMONS, NO NIGHTMARES OR BLITHE FEARS.
WHY THEN, THIS NEW HORROR?
PERHAPS OUR LORD MAY ANSWER THAT, FAT ONE.
'TIS OBVIOUS, METHINKS--

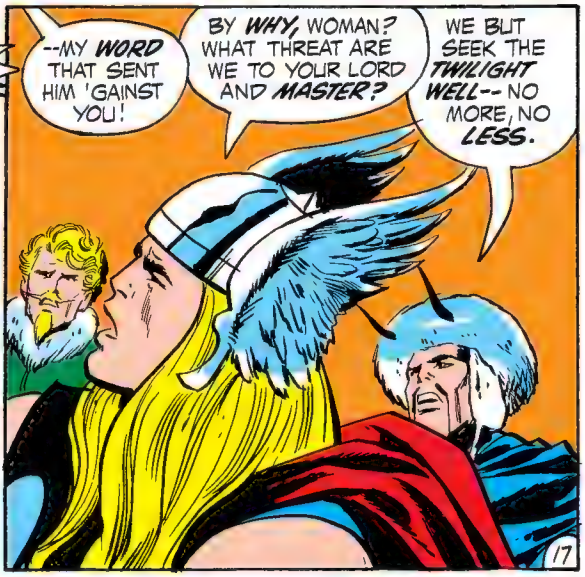

--FOR THE CREATURE HATH SURROUNDED US--
--WITH A SEA OF BOILING FLAME!
BY ODIN'S BEARD. BE THERE NO ESCAPE?

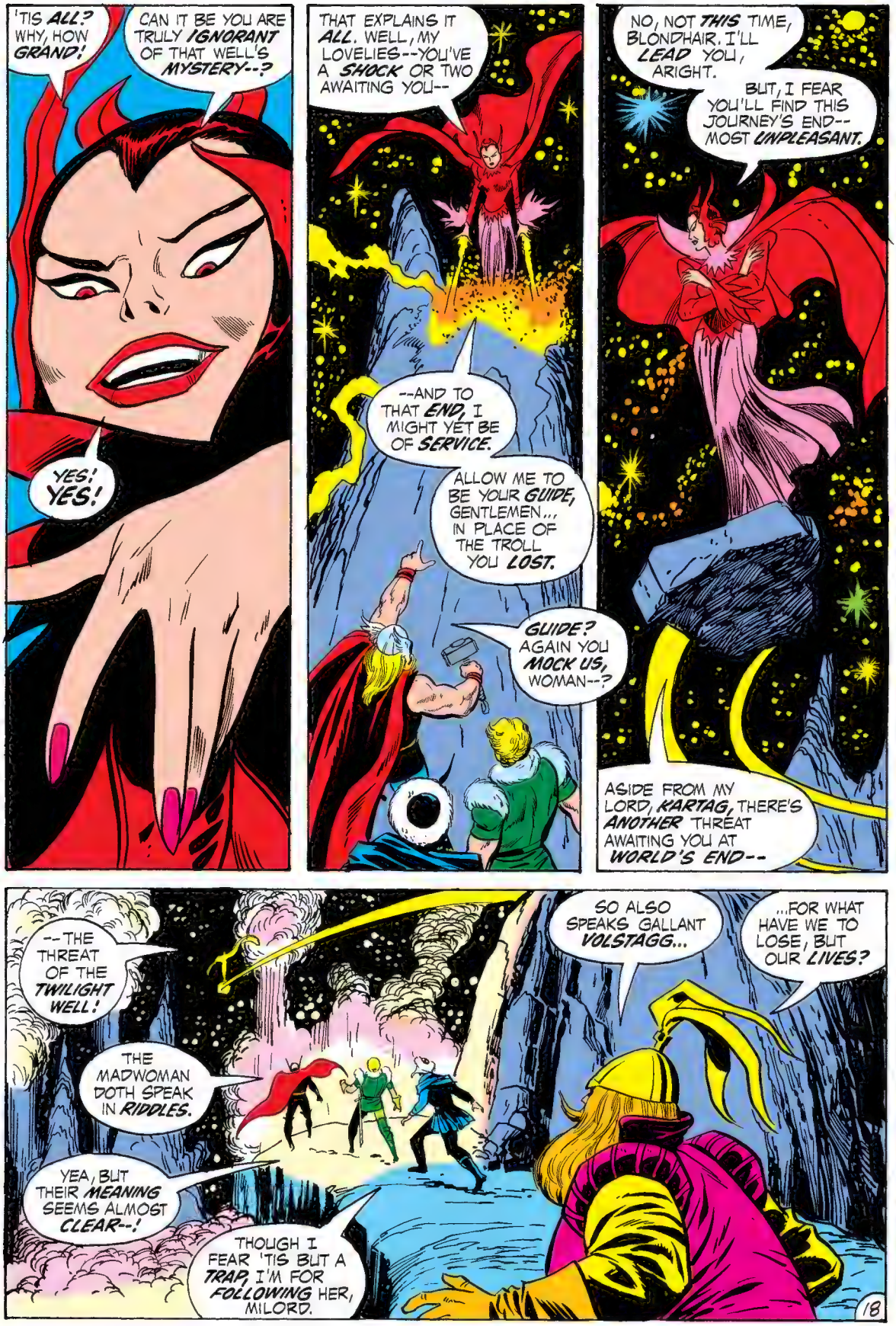

NAY, NO NORMAL ESCAPE, FOR SURE--
--NONE WHICH SHE MIGHT HAVE FORSEEN--


--SAVE THE POWER OF MJOLNIR!
LORD THOR, ONE DAY I'LL KISS THAT BLESSED HAMMER!

BUT, PRAY THEE,,, WHAT DIDST THOU MEAN BY "SHE"?
SURELY THOU DOTH JEST.
WHO ELSE BUT--
THUNDER GOD! UPON YON SHALLOW LEDGE--


--SATRINA!
BUT OF COURSE, BLACKHAIR, 'TWAS MY HAND THAT CREATED REDGUARD--


--MY WORD THAT SENT HIM 'GAINST YOU!
BY WHY, WOMAN? WHAT THREAT ARE WE TO YOUR LORD AND MASTER?
WE BUT SEEK THE TWILIGHT WELL-- NO MORE, NO LESS.

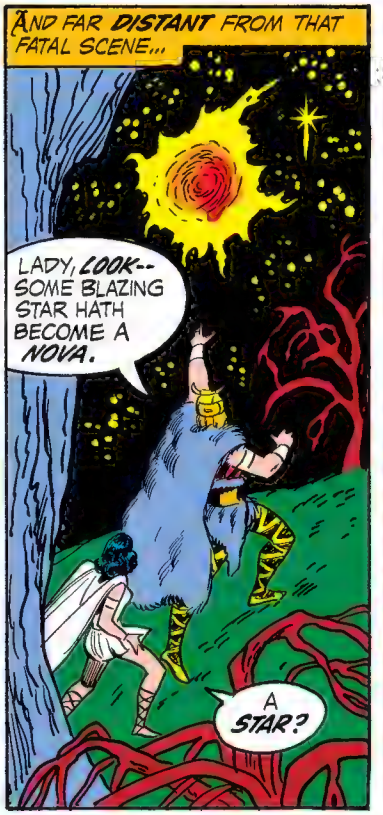

'TIS ALL? WHY, HOW GRAND!
CAN IT BE YOU ARE TRULY IGNORANT OF THAT WELL'S MYSTERY--?
YES! YES!
THAT EXPLAINS IT ALL. WELL, MY LOVELIES--YOU'VE A SHOCK OR TWO AWAITING YOU--
--AND TO THAT END, I MIGHT YET BE OF SERVICE.
ALLOW ME TO BE YOUR GUIDE, GENTLEMEN... IN PLACE OF THE TROLL YOU LOST.
GUIDE? AGAIN YOU MOCK US, WOMAN--?
NO, NOT THIS TIME, BLONDHAIR. I'LL LEAD YOU, ARIGHT.
BUT, I FEAR YOU'LL FIND THIS JOURNEY'S END-- MOST UNPLEASANT.
ASIDE FROM MY LORD, KARTAG, THERE'S ANOTHER THREAT AWAITING YOU AT WORLD'S END--
--THE THREAT OF THE TWILIGHT WELL!
THE MADWOMAN DOTH SPEAK IN RIDDLES.
YEA, BUT THEIR MEANING SEEMS ALMOST CLEAR--!
THOUGH I FEAR 'TIS BUT A TRAP, I'M FOR FOLLOWING HER, MILORD.
SO ALSO SPEAKS GALLANT VOLSTAGG...
...FOR WHAT HAVE WE TO LOSE, BUT OUR LIVES?

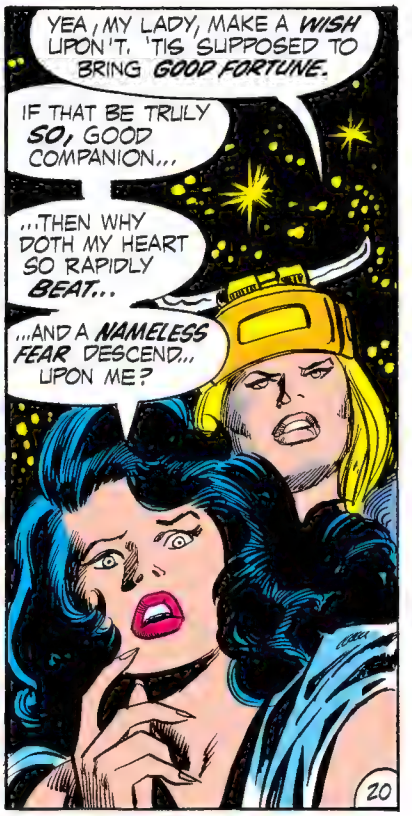
AHH, BUT MORE THAN THY LIVELIHOOD BE CONCERNED VOLSTAGG...
ALL ASGARD HANGS IN THE SWAY!
NOW, LORD ODIN...
...THOU MUST HAND HIM TO ME, FOR HE IS MINE.
SO SOON? HAVE I REGAINED HIS FRIENDSHIP THESE PAST HOURS, ONLY TO SO QUICKLY LOSE IT?
KHAN WAS THE OLDEST OF MY FRIENDS, WOMAN...
...THE OLDEST AND MOST DEAR.
THOUGH MY DUTY BE PLAIN--
THINK THEE THAT HELA BE UNKNOWING OF THIS?
--IT BE NEVER PLEASANT.
LIKE ONE IN A TRANCE, ODIN MOVES TO THE SOUTHERN GATES...
...WHERE THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF CARNAGE DO MOST BRUTALLY ASSAULT HIS WEARY SENSES...
FOR AN INSTANT, HE STANDS WATCHING, THE SOUNDS STILLED--
AND THEN SOMETHING WITHIN HIS NOBLE SOUL DOTH BREAK, AND THE ALL-FATHER CRIES OUT--
ENOUGH!
TOO MANY GOOD MEN HAVE DIED THIS DAY--
--TOO MANY BOLD THOUGHTS ARE ENDED! I HAVE SEEN ENOW!
19

NO LONGER CAN WE WAIT FOR THOR TO RETURN WITH THE WELL-WATERS WE SO DESPERATELY NEED!
NOW, THERE MUST COME AN END!
IF NAUGHT ELSE, I BE THE MASTER OF MY OWN DOMAIN--

--MASTER OF ITS LIFE, AND MASTER OF ITS DEATH!
ALL ELSE HATH FAILED, THE MANGOG HATH ALMOST TRIUMPHED--
--AND FOR THE SAKE OF A THOUSAND UNIVERSES--THIS MUST NOT BE!

--THIS DAY, BY MY POWER, BY MY GLORY--THE SACRED WORLD DOTH FOREVERMORE PASS AWAY!!!
THROOM


AND FAR DISTANT FROM THAT FATAL SCENE...
LADY, LOOK-- SOME BLAZING STAR HATH BECOME A NOVA.
A STAR?


YEA, MY LADY, MAKE A WISH UPON'T. 'TIS SUPPOSED TO BRING GOOD FORTUNE.
IF THAT BE TRULY SO, GOOD COMPANION...
...THEN WHY DOTH MY HEART SO RAPIDLY BEAT...
...AND A NAMELESS FEAR DESCEND... UPON ME?

YET THEIRS ARE THE SOLE EYES WITNESS TO THE SCENE, FOR THE ONLY OTHER EYES TO CARE ARE 'NEATH COLD STONE...
HERE, WITCH?
YES, BLONDHAIR.
THAT WHICH YOU SEEK LIES BEYOND..
...IN THAT NIGHT-DARK CAVE.
THOR...
...GO NOT FORWARD. I FEAR FOR THY SAFETY.
NAY, GOOD FRIEND. I DO... WHAT I MUST.
THEN AT LEAST LET US--
NAY! THOR GOES ALONE!
THE CHAMBER BEYOND IS FILLED WITH SWIRLING SMOKE, AND A MOIST, BITTER STENCH OF BURNING WOOL. HAMMER UNLIMBERED, EYES AGAINST THE DARKNESS, THE THUNDER GOD DOTH MOVE SLOWLY FORWARD, UNTIL A HARSH BELLOW SHATTERS THE ECHOING SILENCE--
BLONDHAIR, THOU ART AN ARROGANT FOOL!
THIS DAY THOU HAST PLAYED THY FINAL HAND--
--AND NOW THOU WILT DIE-- IN THE GRIP OF KARTAG!
NEXT ISSUE: THE SECRET OF THE WELL!

THOR
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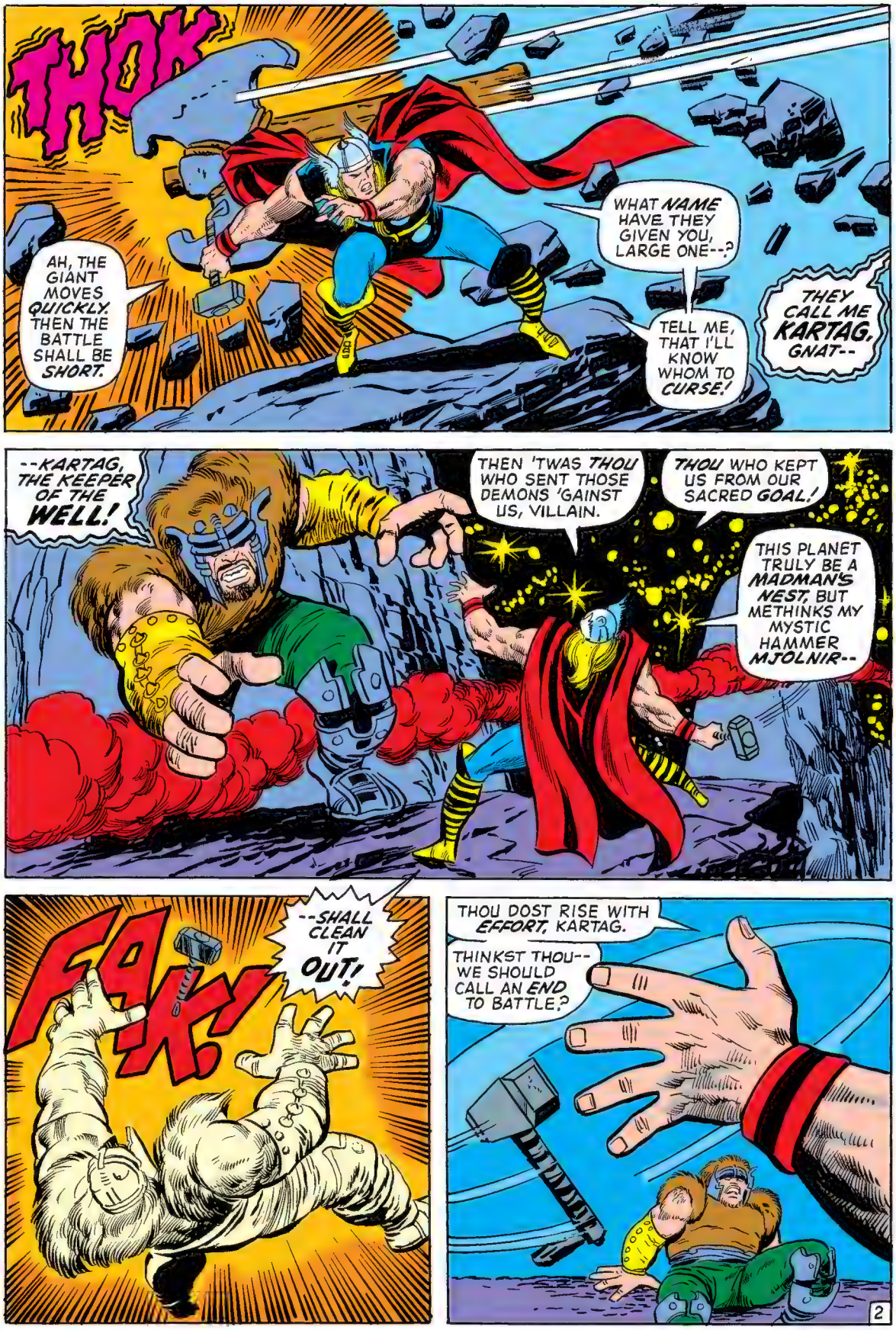
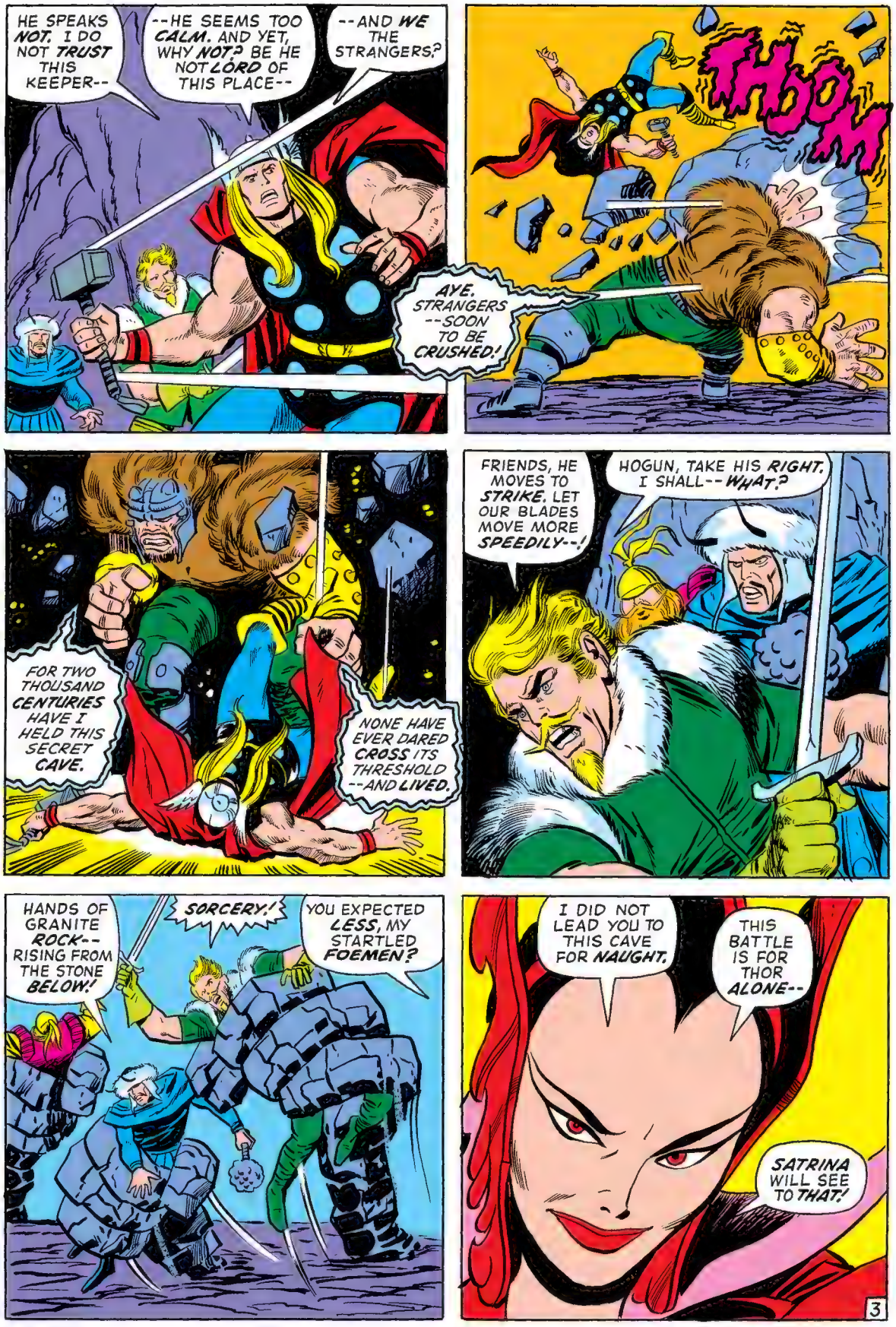
THE MIGHTY
THOR
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MANGOG UNLEASHED!

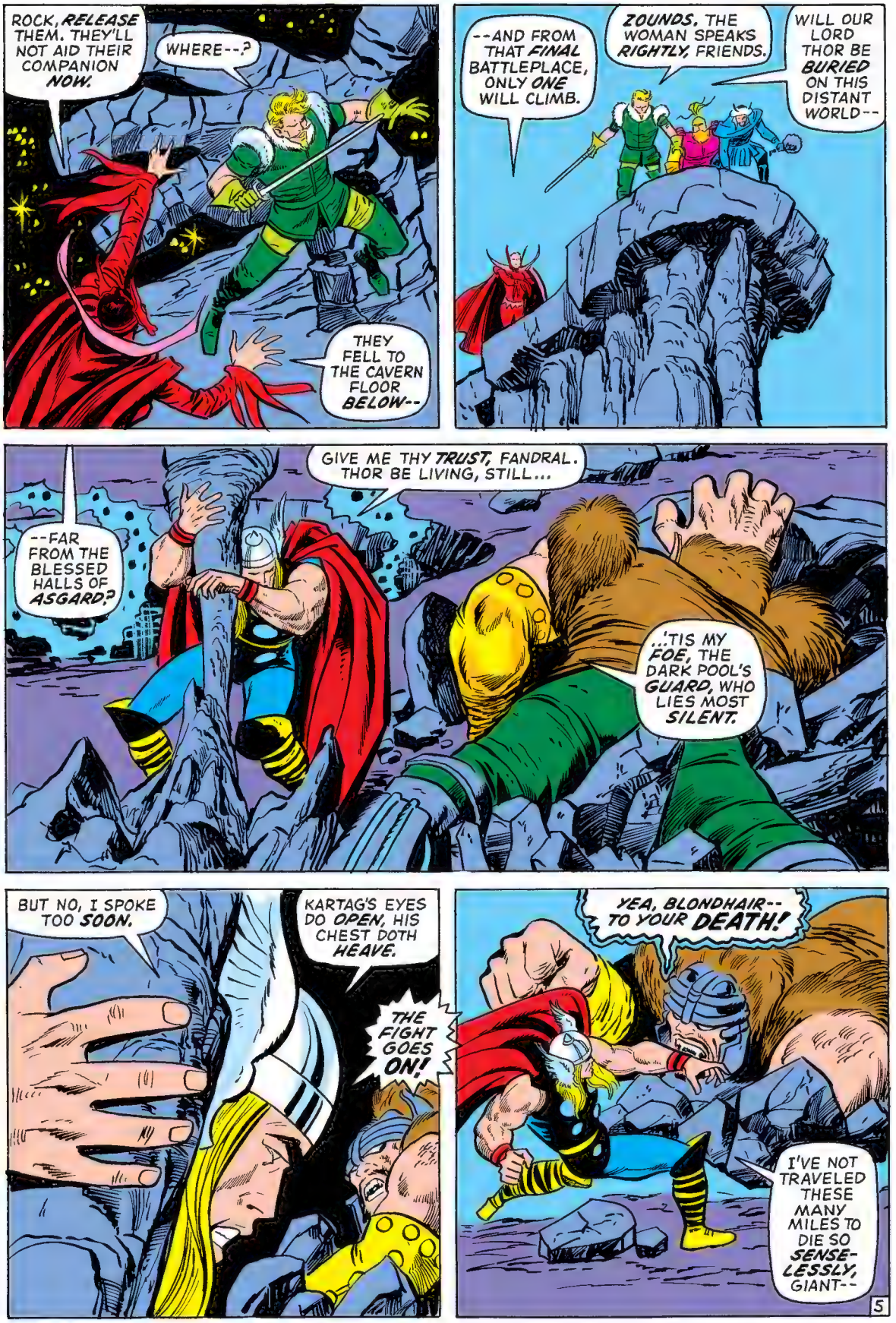
THE MIGHTY THOR!™

THE WELL AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD!
MY LORD THOR-- THIS BE MADNESS! THOU DOST NOT EVEN KNOW WHY THY FATHER ODIN HATH SENT US ON THIS MYSTIC QUEST--
--SENT US HERE, THAT WE SHOULD BATTLE FOR THE WATERS OF SOME TWILIGHT WELL?*
SAY NO MORE, FRIEND HOGUN. THIS, AT LEAST, I KNOW--
--THOR MUST FIGHT YON CRAGGY GIANT--
--FOR ODIN-- AND FOR ASGARD!
AND VOLSTAGG SHALL DULY GUARD THEE FROM BEHIND, MILORD!
WHERE ELSE, VOLUMINOUS ONE? HATH NOT THOR ORDERED US ALL TO FLANK HIS REAR?
YET UNDERSTAND THIS, MY FRIEND. IF NOBLE THOR FALLS--
'TIS THE BLADE OF FANDRAL WHICH NEXT WILL STRIKE!
AS ALL BEHIND HIM WATCH, BREATH INDRAWN --THE THUNDER GOD STEPS WITHIN THE DARKENED CAVE, AND THESE SPINNERS TAKE UP THEIR WEAVE:
*SHOWN IN #195-196 OF THIS MAGAZINE. --TERSE STAN.
STAN LEE, EDITOR
GERRY CONWAY, SCRIPTER
JOHN BUSCEMA, ARTIST
VINCE COLLETTA, INKER
ARTIE SIMEK, LETTERER

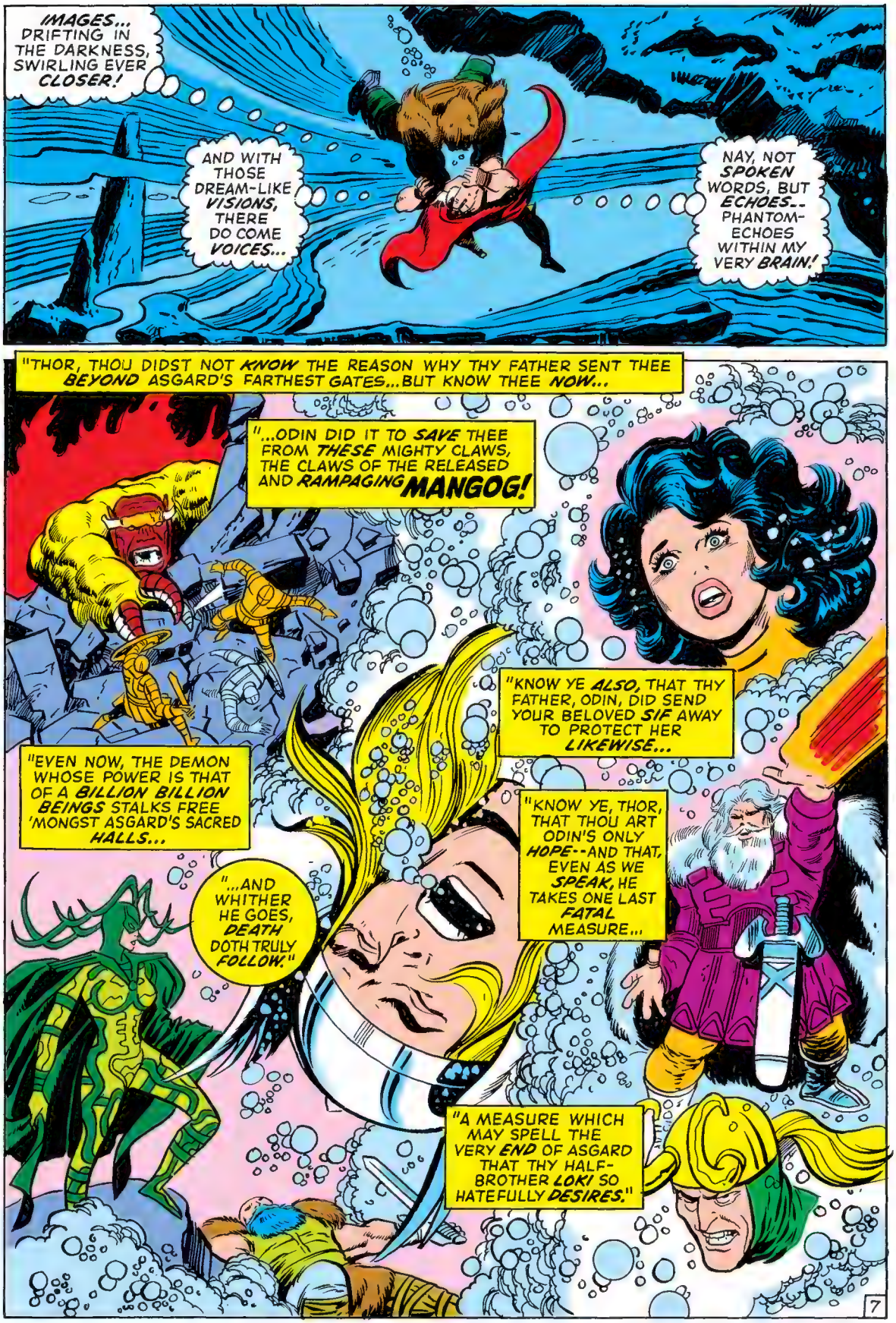

THOK!
AH, THE GIANT MOVES QUICKLY. THEN THE BATTLE SHALL BE SHORT.
WHAT NAME HAVE THEY GIVEN YOU, LARGE ONE--?
TELL ME, THAT I'LL KNOW WHOM TO CURSE!
THEY CALL ME KARTAG, GNAT--
--KARTAG, THE KEEPER OF THE WELL!
THEN 'TWAS THOU WHO SENT THOSE DEMONS 'GAINST US, VILLAIN.
THOU WHO KEPT US FROM OUR SACRED GOAL!
THIS PLANET TRULY BE A MADMAN'S NEST, BUT METHINKS MY MYSTIC HAMMER MJOLNIR--
FA-K!
--SHALL CLEAN IT OUT!
THOU DOST RISE WITH EFFORT, KARTAG.
THINKST THOU-- WE SHOULD CALL AN END TO BATTLE?
2


HE SPEAKS NOT. I DO NOT TRUST THIS KEEPER--
--HE SEEMS TOO CALM. AND YET, WHY NOT? BE HE NOT LORD OF THIS PLACE--
--AND WE THE STRANGERS?
THOOM
AYE. STRANGERS --SOON TO BE CRUSHED!
FOR TWO THOUSAND CENTURIES HAVE I HELD THIS SECRET CAVE.
NONE HAVE EVER DARED CROSS ITS THRESHOLD --AND LIVED.
FRIENDS, HE MOVES TO STRIKE. LET OUR BLADES MOVE MORE SPEEDILY--!
HOGUN, TAKE HIS RIGHT. I SHALL--WHAT?
HANDS OF GRANITE ROCK-- RISING FROM THE STONE BELOW!
SORCERY!
YOU EXPECTED LESS, MY STARTLED FOEMEN?
I DID NOT LEAD YOU TO THIS CAVE FOR NAUGHT.
THIS BATTLE IS FOR THOR ALONE--
SATRINA WILL SEE TO THAT!
3

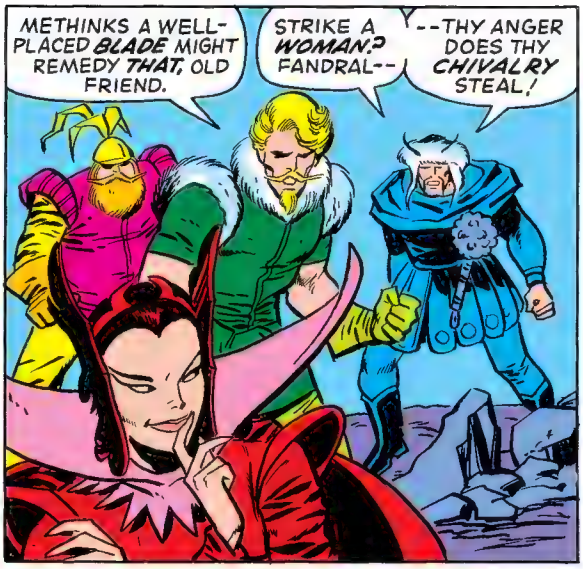
VIXEN! WE SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED AS MUCH FROM A WITCH.
WHY WE LET THEE GUIDE US HERE, I'LL NEVER--!
STARS ABOVE! THE STONE SHATTERS NOT!
OUR WEAPONS BE USELESS AGAINST IT!
SATRINA, THOU DIDST SHOW THY LOVE MOST STRANGELY.
IF TRULY THOU DOST CARE FOR ME, THEN WHY BRING THEM--
STOP DANCING, BLONDHAIR! HOLD STILL!
NAY! I'LL KEEP MYSELF ALIVE, MY FRIEND--
--FOR MY QUEST BE CERTAINLY A SACRED ONE--
--COMMISSIONED BY ODIN HIMSELF!
FOR REASONS I'VE YET TO LEARN, I'M TO STEAL WATER FROM THAT NIGHTBLACK POOL, AND NO GUARD WILL EVER STOP M--
-UNNNNH!-
FOOL! NOW WE'RE FALLING!
NAY, MONSTER. THOU ART FALLING.
AND THOU WILT MAKE A HANDY MATTRESS, METHINKS!
SKRASH!
4


ROCK, RELEASE THEM. THEY'LL NOT AID THEIR COMPANION NOW.
WHERE--?
THEY FELL TO THE CAVERN FLOOR BELOW--
--AND FROM THAT FINAL BATTLEPLACE, ONLY ONE WILL CLIMB.
ZOUNDS, THE WOMAN SPEAKS RIGHTLY, FRIENDS.
WILL OUR LORD THOR BE BURIED ON THIS DISTANT WORLD--
--FAR FROM THE BLESSED HALLS OF ASGARD?
GIVE ME THY TRUST, FANDRAL. THOR BE LIVING, STILL...
..'TIS MY FOE, THE DARK POOL'S GUARD, WHO LIES MOST SILENT.
BUT NO, I SPOKE TOO SOON.
KARTAG'S EYES DO OPEN, HIS CHEST DOTH HEAVE.
THE FIGHT GOES ON!
YEA, BLONDHAIR-- TO YOUR DEATH!
I'VE NOT TRAVELED THESE MANY MILES TO DIE SO SENSELESSLY, GIANT--
5

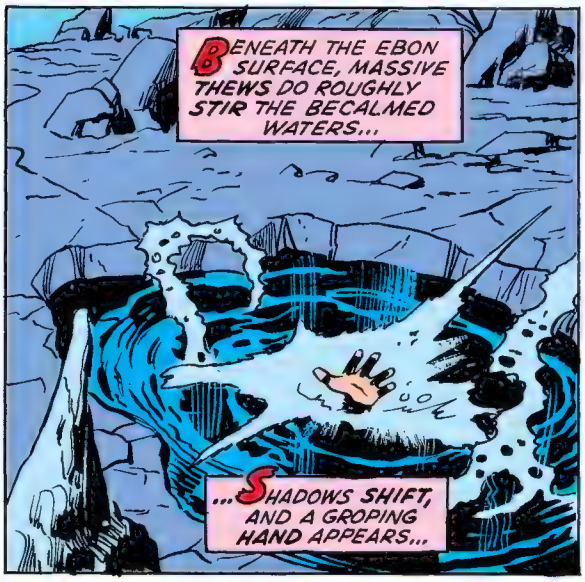
--THE JOURNEY HAS BEEN LONG, AND HARD--
--MADE SO BY THY CREATURES' TREACHERY.
NAY, I'LL NOT DIE--
--NOT WITHOUT LEARNING THE SECRET OF THAT WELL--
--AND WHY MY LORD ODIN-- HATH GIVEN ME THIS QUEST--!
THOU DOST FIGHT WELL BLONDHAIR. THY BLOWS ARE STRONG.
I'LL BEAR A MOMENT'S GRIEF IN MY WARRIOR'S HEART--
--AT THE PASSING OF ONE SO BOLD!
YOU SEEK THE WELL? HAVE IT, THEN!
LUNGING FORWARD, THE KEEPER CARRIES THE YOUNG GOD BACK--
--AND, LIKE TWO STRUGGLING INSECTS, THEY PLUNGE BENEATH THOSE ICY WATERS.
THOR FEELS THE BREATH BURSTING FROM HIS LUNGS, THE PRESSURES OF THE FROZEN DEEPS CLOSING IN ON HIM LIKE LEADEN CLAMPS...
THEN, HE BEGINS TO SEE THEM.


IMAGES... DRIFTING IN THE DARKNESS, SWIRLING EVER CLOSER!
AND WITH THOSE DREAM-LIKE VISIONS, THERE DO COME VOICES...
NAY, NOT SPOKEN WORDS, BUT ECHOES-- PHANTOM-ECHOES WITHIN MY VERY BRAIN!
"THOR, THOU DIDST NOT KNOW THE REASON WHY THY FATHER SENT THEE BEYOND ASGARD'S FARTHEST GATES...BUT KNOW THEE NOW...
"...ODIN DID IT TO SAVE THEE FROM THESE MIGHTY CLAWS, THE CLAWS OF THE RELEASED AND RAMPAGING MANGOG!
"KNOW YE ALSO, THAT THY FATHER, ODIN, DID SEND YOUR BELOVED SIF AWAY TO PROTECT HER LIKEWISE...
"EVEN NOW, THE DEMON WHOSE POWER IS THAT OF A BILLION BILLION BEINGS STALKS FREE 'MONGST ASGARD'S SACRED HALLS...
"KNOW YE, THOR, THAT THOU ART ODIN'S ONLY HOPE--AND THAT, EVEN AS WE SPEAK, HE TAKES ONE LAST FATAL MEASURE...
"...AND WHITHER HE GOES, DEATH DOTH TRULY FOLLOW."
"A MEASURE WHICH MAY SPELL THE VERY END OF ASGARD THAT THY HALF-BROTHER LOKI SO HATEFULLY DESIRES."
7

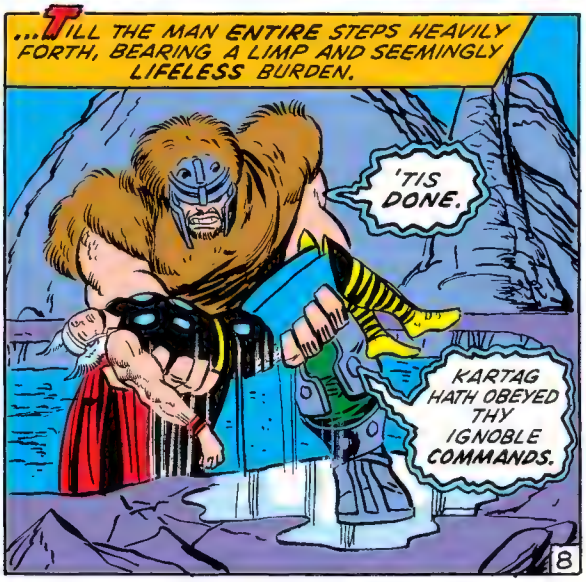
I LIKE IT NOT, HOGUN. TOO LONG HAVE THEY BEEN BENEATH THOSE CHURNING WAVES.
AYE. EVEN THOR'S LUNGS MIGHT BE WEARILY STRAINED.
YET... WHAT MAY WE DO, FRIEND FANDRAL?
THE VIXEN HOLDS US STILL.

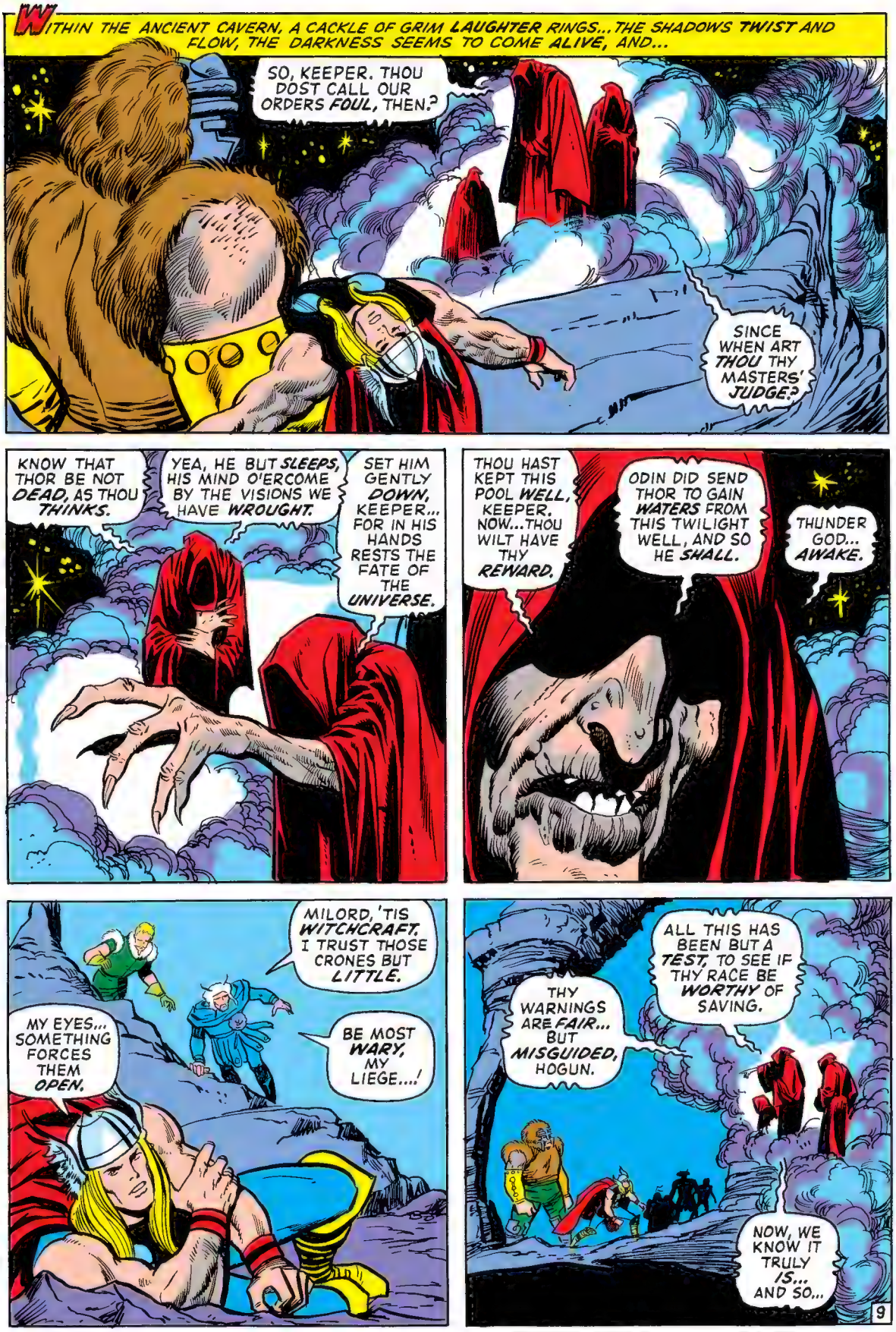

METHINKS A WELL-PLACED BLADE MIGHT REMEDY THAT, OLD FRIEND.
STRIKE A WOMAN? FANDRAL--
--THY ANGER DOES THY CHIVALRY STEAL!

AND WHILE THOU TWO DO BICKER, VOLSTAGG'S EAGLE EYES DO SPY THE ANSWER TO OUR FEARS...
LOOK THEE-- THE POOL!

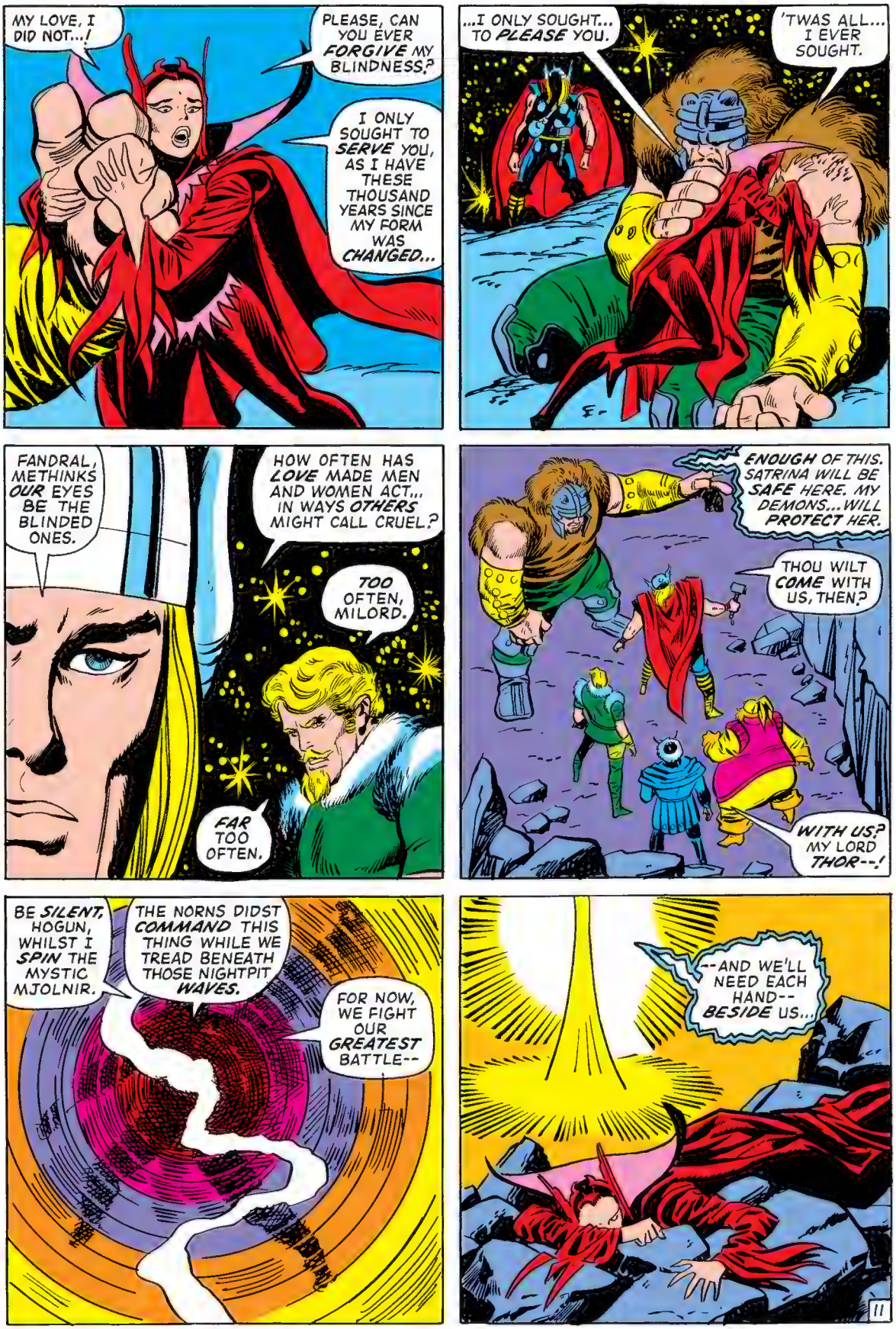

BENEATH THE EBON SURFACE, MASSIVE THEWS DO ROUGHLY STIR THE BECALMED WATERS...
...SHADOWS SHIFT, AND A GROPING HAND APPEARS...

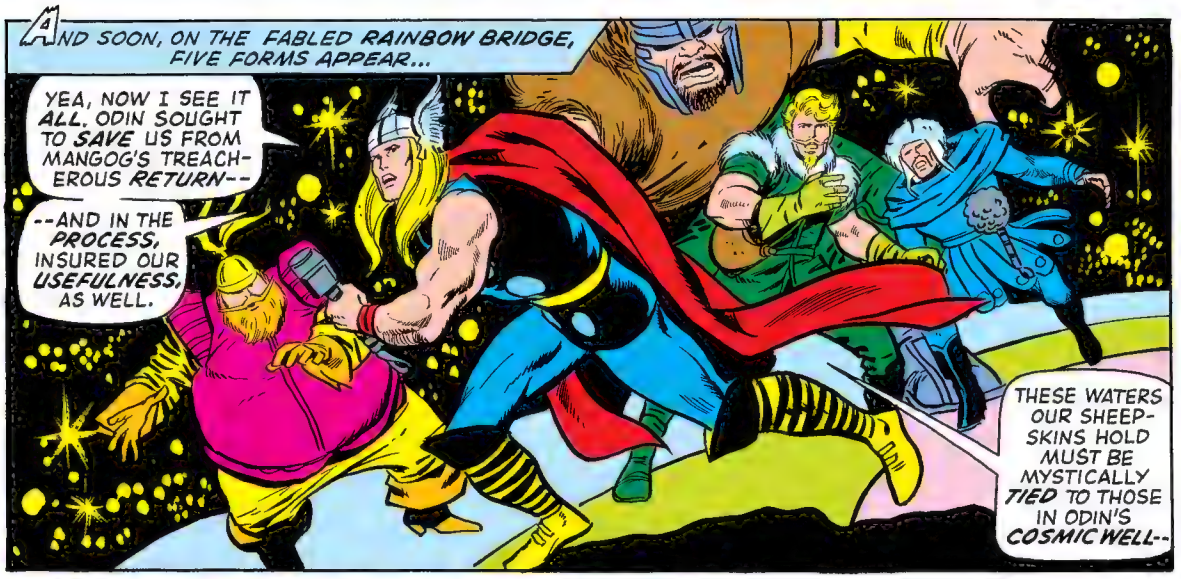
...FOLLOWED BY AN ARM, THEN BY BROAD-BACKED SHOULDERS...


...TILL THE MAN ENTIRE STEPS HEAVILY FORTH, BEARING A LIMP AND SEEMINGLY LIFELESS BURDEN.
'TIS DONE.
KARTAG HATH OBEYED THY IGNOBLE COMMANDS.

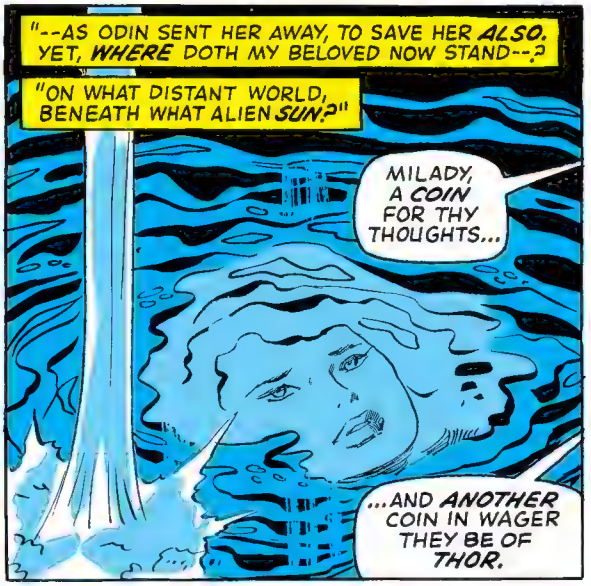

WITHIN THE ANCIENT CAVERN, A CACKLE OF GRIM LAUGHTER RINGS... THE SHADOWS TWIST AND FLOW, THE DARKNESS SEEMS TO COME ALIVE, AND...
SO, KEEPER. THOU DOST CALL OUR ORDERS FOUL, THEN?
SINCE WHEN ART THOU THY MASTERS' JUDGE?
KNOW THAT THOR BE NOT DEAD, AS THOU THINKS.
YEA, HE BUT SLEEPS, HIS MIND O'ERCOME BY THE VISIONS WE HAVE WROUGHT.
SET HIM GENTLY DOWN, KEEPER... FOR IN HIS HANDS RESTS THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE.
THOU HAST KEPT THIS POOL WELL, KEEPER. NOW... THOU WILT HAVE THY REWARD.
ODIN DID SEND THOR TO GAIN WATERS FROM THIS TWILIGHT WELL, AND SO HE SHALL.
THUNDER GOD... AWAKE.
MILORD, 'TIS WITCHCRAFT. I TRUST THOSE CRONES BUT LITTLE.
MY EYES... SOMETHING FORCES THEM OPEN.
BE MOST WARY, MY LIEGE...!
ALL THIS HAS BEEN BUT A TEST, TO SEE IF THY RACE BE WORTHY OF SAVING.
THY WARNINGS ARE FAIR... BUT MISGUIDED, HOGUN.
NOW, WE KNOW IT TRULY IS... AND SO...
9

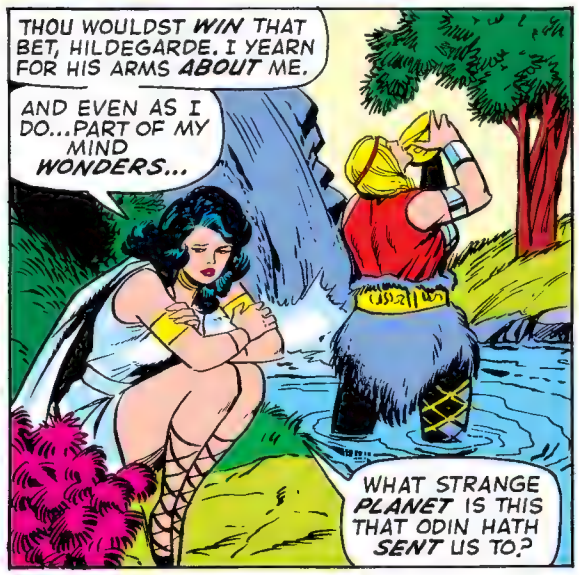
...THOU SHALT HAVE WHAT THOU HAST SOUGHT!
ZOUNDS! SHEEPSKINS--FOR WHAT BLACK PURPOSE?
CALM THYSELF, VOLSTAGG. WE'VE NAUGHT TO FEAR, I THINK.
NAY, THE DANGER COMES FROM ANOTHER QUARTER...
...ONE THESE WATERS ART DESTINED TO FIGHT.
MILORD...?
I'LL TELL THEE LATER, FRIEND.
NO! YOU CANNOT MEAN THIS--
THESE MEN GO FREE? AFTER ALL THE PAIN I SUFFERED TO CAPTURE THEM--
--TO HOLD THEM--FOR YOU?
SATRINA, MY LOVE--
--THOU DOST UNDERSTAND LITTLE OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE THIS DAY.
THOSE WOMEN--
THEN IT'S THEIR DOING! THEY ARE THE ONES WHO'VE STOLEN YOU FROM ME--
--AND THEY SHALL DIE!
NAY!
FEAR NOT, KARTAG. OUR POWER BE SUPREME.
THY LOVER DOTH NOT KNOW US YET--NOR CAN SHE SEE WHY WE'VE GIVEN THOR HIS LIFE.
SATRINA, MY LOVELY--
--WE BE THE NORNS!
NONE HATH POWER AGAINST US, NOT E'EN THE ALL-FATHER HIMSELF.
THOR AND THY LOVER HAVE SEEN OUR MYSTIC WELL, AND KNOW--
MEN CALL US... THE FATES!

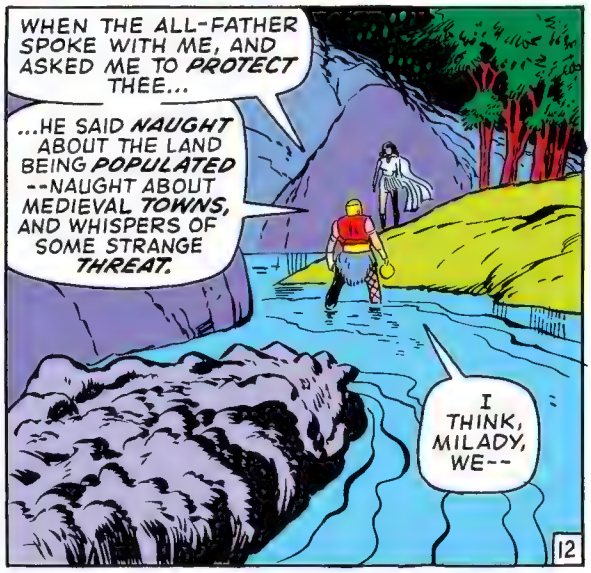

MY LOVE, I DID NOT...!
PLEASE, CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE MY BLINDNESS?
I ONLY SOUGHT TO SERVE YOU, AS I HAVE THESE THOUSAND YEARS SINCE MY FORM WAS CHANGED...
...I ONLY SOUGHT... TO PLEASE YOU.
'TWAS ALL... I EVER SOUGHT.
FANDRAL, METHINKS OUR EYES BE THE BLINDED ONES.
HOW OFTEN HAS LOVE MADE MEN AND WOMEN ACT... IN WAYS OTHERS MIGHT CALL CRUEL?
TOO OFTEN, MILORD.
FAR TOO OFTEN.
ENOUGH OF THIS. SATRINA WILL BE SAFE HERE. MY DEMONS... WILL PROTECT HER.
THOU WILT COME WITH US, THEN?
WITH US? MY LORD THOR--!
BE SILENT, HOGUN, WHILST I SPIN THE MYSTIC MJOLNIR.
THE NORNS DIDST COMMAND THIS THING WHILE WE TREAD BENEATH THOSE NIGHTPIT WAVES.
FOR NOW, WE FIGHT OUR GREATEST BATTLE--
--AND WE'LL NEED EACH HAND-- BESIDE US...!

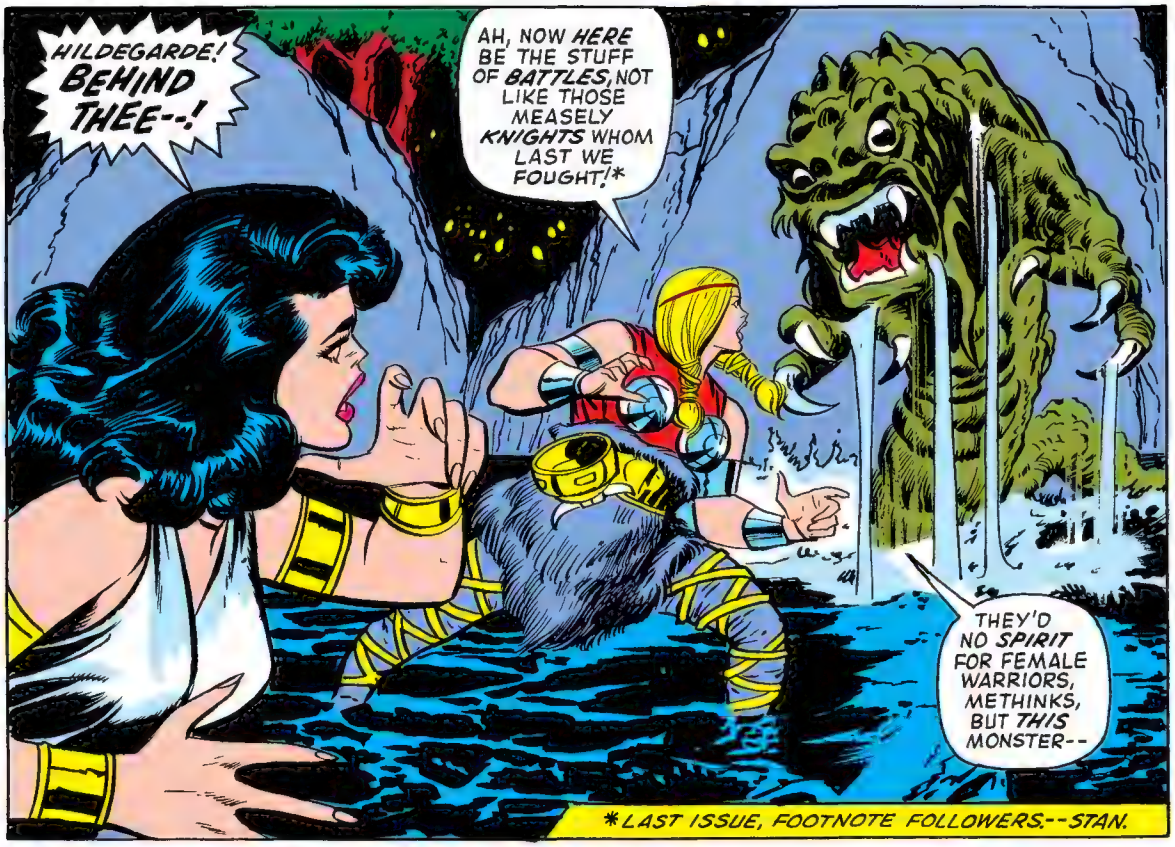

AND SOON, ON THE FABLED RAINBOW BRIDGE, FIVE FORMS APPEAR...
YEA, NOW I SEE IT ALL. ODIN SOUGHT TO SAVE US FROM MANGOG'S TREACHEROUS RETURN--
--AND IN THE PROCESS, INSURED OUR USEFULNESS, AS WELL.
THESE WATERS OUR SHEEPSKINS HOLD MUST BE MYSTICALLY TIED TO THOSE IN ODIN'S COSMIC WELL--

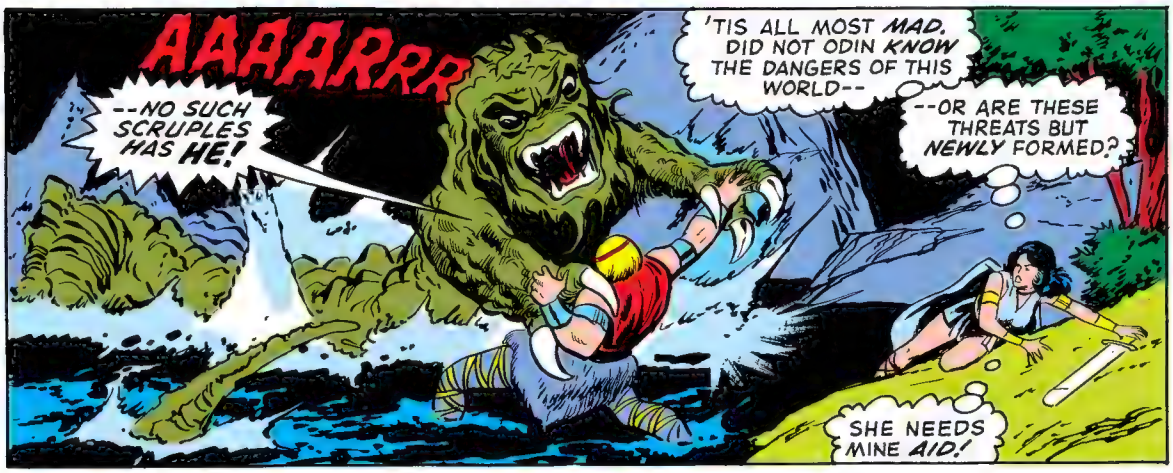
AND, MAYHAP--IN SOME WAY WE CAN-NOT UNDERSTAND--ASGARD'S FATE BE CAST WITH OUR OWN.
YEA, AND ANOTHER'S FATE, TOO--FOR FAIR SIF MAY BE AN ETERNITY REMOVED--


"--AS ODIN SENT HER AWAY, TO SAVE HER ALSO. YET, WHERE DOTH MY BELOVED NOW STAND--?
"ON WHAT DISTANT WORLD, BENEATH WHAT ALIEN SUN?"
MILADY, A COIN FOR THY THOUGHTS...
...AND ANOTHER COIN IN WAGER THEY BE OF THOR.


THOU WOULDST WIN THAT BET, HILDEGARDE. I YEARN FOR HIS ARMS ABOUT ME.
AND EVEN AS I DO...PART OF MY MIND WONDERS...
WHAT STRANGE PLANET IS THIS THAT ODIN HATH SENT US TO?

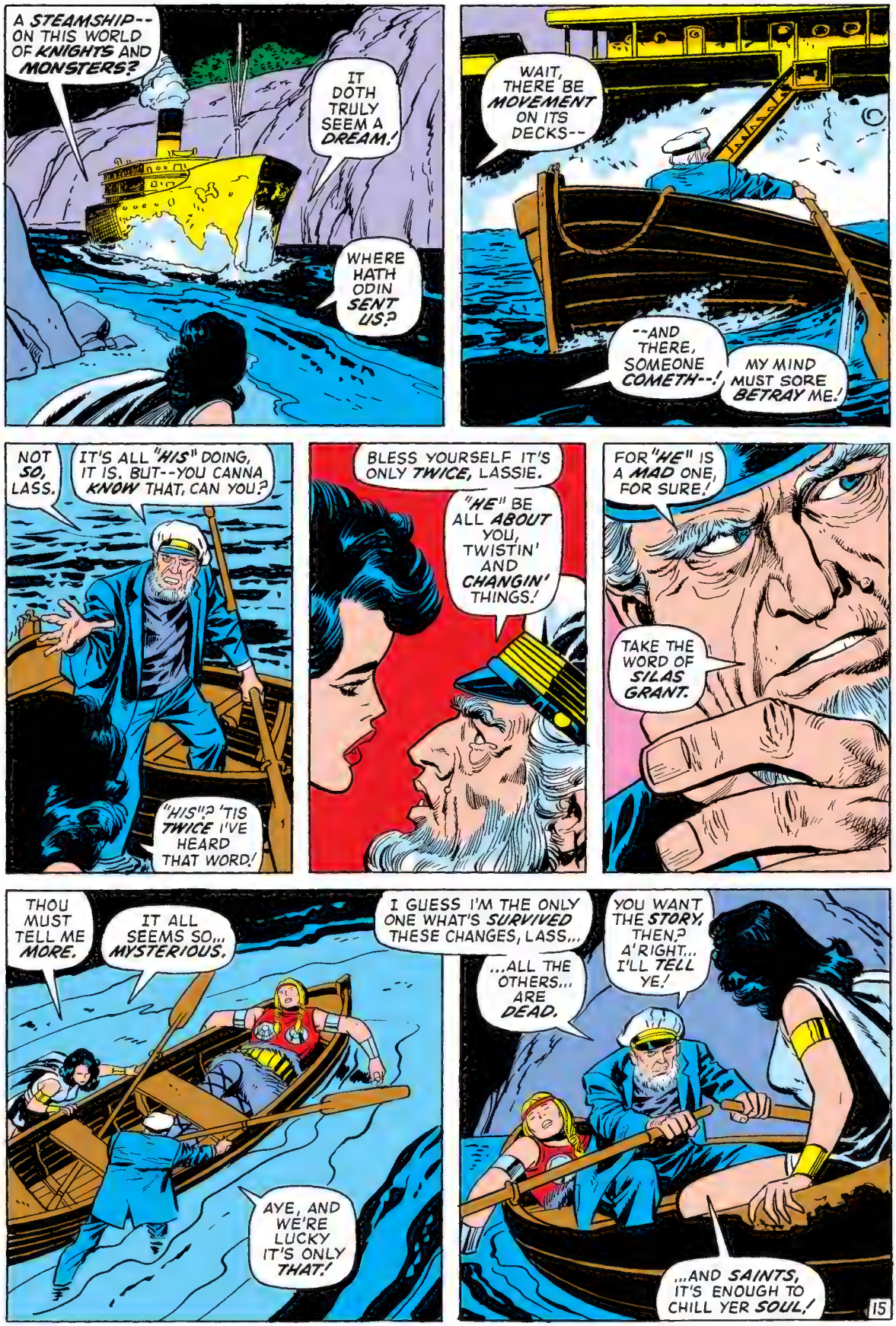

WHEN THE ALL-FATHER SPOKE WITH ME, AND ASKED ME TO PROTECT THEE...
...HE SAID NAUGHT ABOUT THE LAND BEING POPULATED --NAUGHT ABOUT MEDIEVAL TOWNS, AND WHISPERS OF SOME STRANGE THREAT.
I THINK, MILADY, WE--

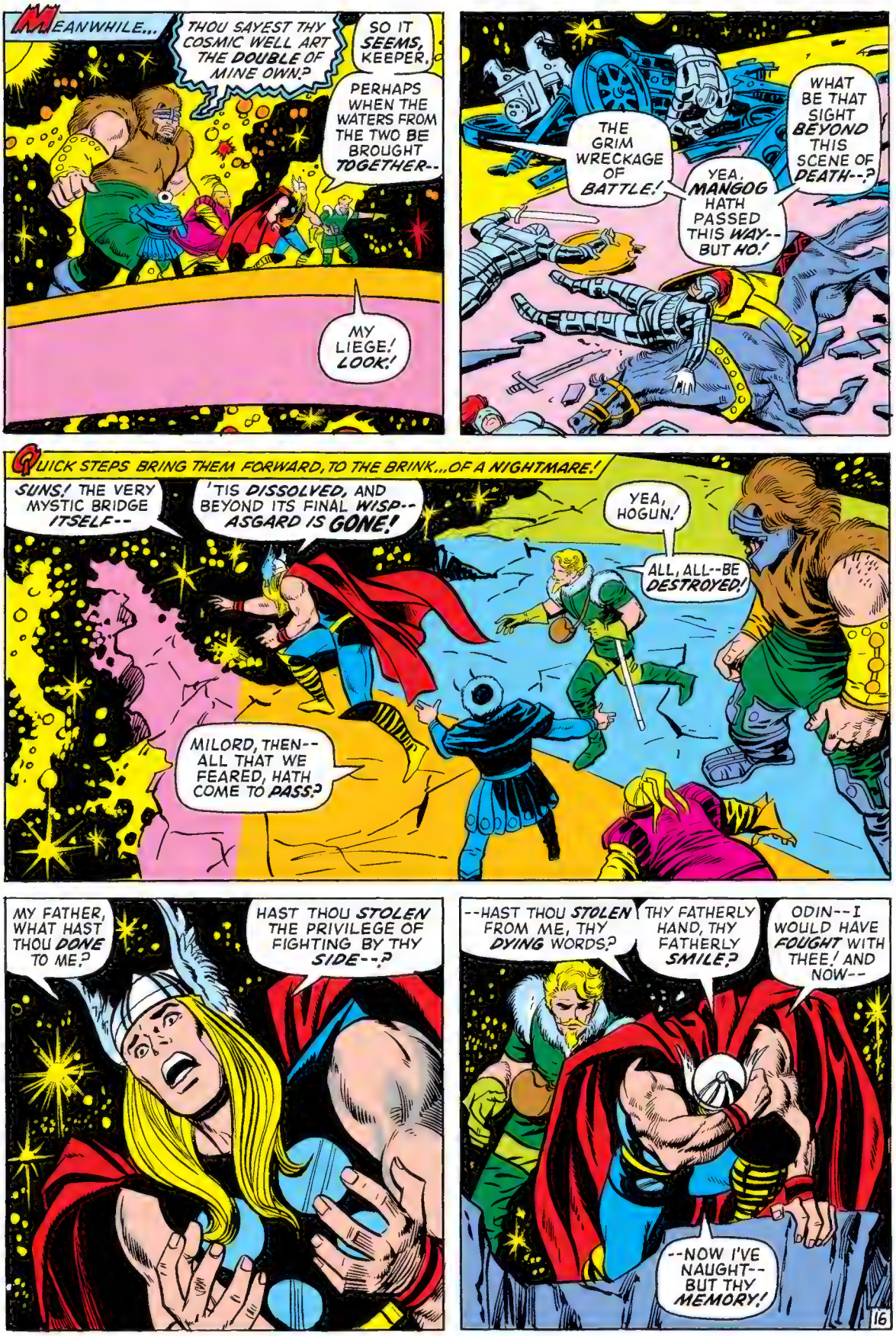

HILDEGARDE! BEHIND THEE--!
AH, NOW HERE BE THE STUFF OF BATTLES, NOT LIKE THOSE MEASELY KNIGHTS WHOM LAST WE FOUGHT!*
THEY'D NO SPIRIT FOR FEMALE WARRIORS, METHINKS, BUT THIS MONSTER--
*LAST ISSUE, FOOTNOTE FOLLOWERS.--STAN.

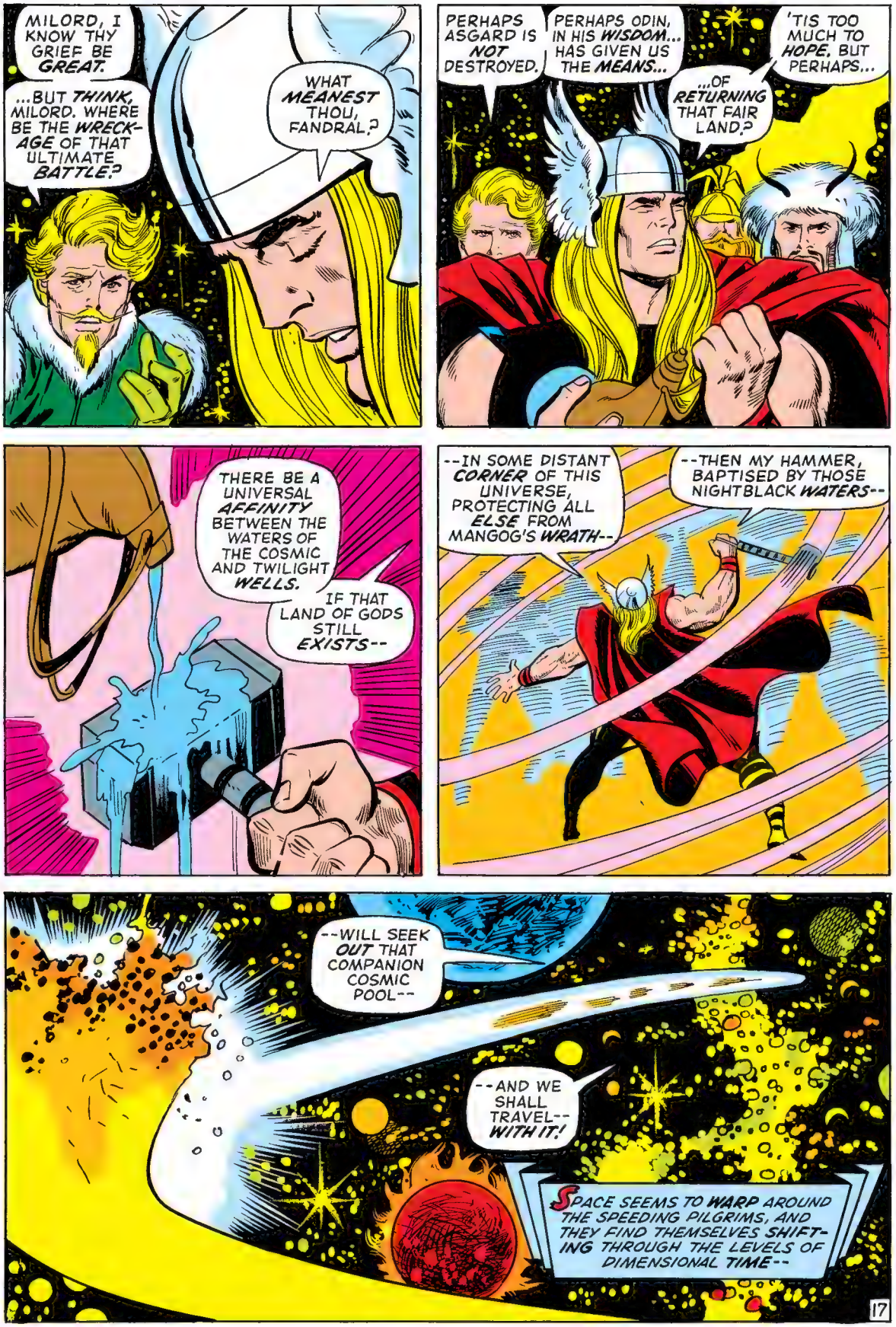

AAAARRR
--NO SUCH SCRUPLES HAS HE!
'TIS ALL MOST MAD, DID NOT ODIN KNOW THE DANGERS OF THIS WORLD--
--OR ARE THESE THREATS BUT NEWLY FORMED?
SHE NEEDS MINE AID!

STAY THEE BACK, GIRL!
I'M CHARGED WITH PROTECTING THEE--AND THAT I'LL DO--
EVEN IF IT MEANS-- MY LIFE!

NAY, THOU ART NO USE DEAD.
SIF BE TOO SELFISH TO LET THEE LEAVE HER ALONE--!
HO! THE HIDE BE TOO STRONG!
GIRL, 'TIS A MAGIC SWORD THOU DOST HOLD!
USE THY GODDESS-HOOD-- OR DIE!
NOW I UNDER-STAND!
'TWAS A GIFT FROM ODIN HIMSELF, METHINKS--
--AND, LIKE HIS SACRED ODIN-RING--
--GAINS POWER FROM WITHIN ITS BEARER!
STRIKE, BLADE! STRIKE!
CCCZZZZZZ
SHE LIES SO STILL!
WAS THE BLOW TOO LATE?
IN THESE PAST DAYS, I'VE GROWN FOND OF HILDEGARDE--
AND IF THIS HOSTILE LAND HAS--
NO...
HER PULSE BE STRONG AND...
...WHAT? THAT SOUND...!
CHUGACHUGACHUGACHUG
NAY! 'TISN'T TRUE!
IT CAN-NOT BE!
14

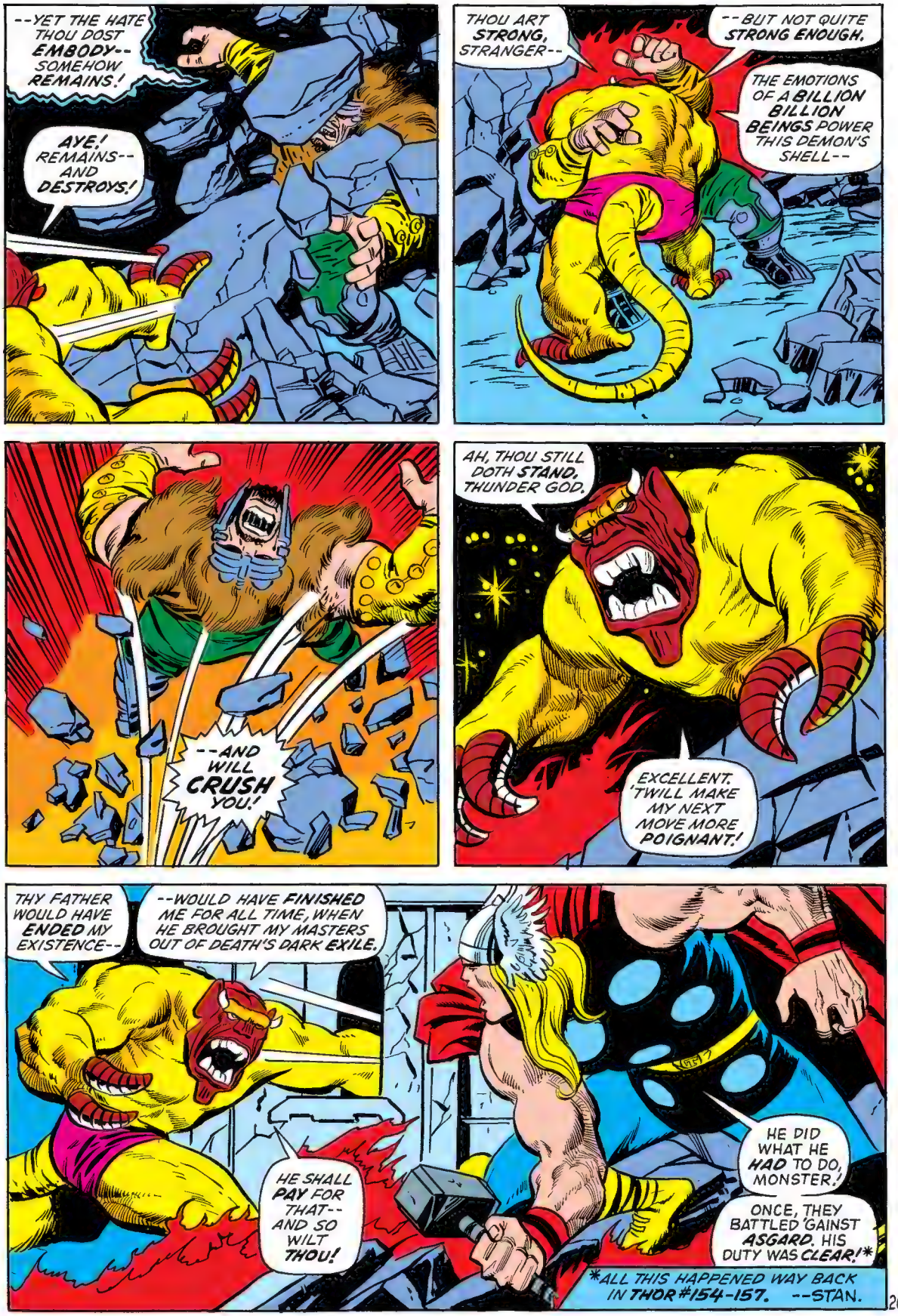

A STEAMSHIP-- ON THIS WORLD OF KNIGHTS AND MONSTERS?
IT DOTH TRULY SEEM A DREAM!
WHERE HATH ODIN SENT US?
WAIT, THERE BE MOVEMENT ON ITS DECKS--
--AND THERE, SOMEONE COMETH--!
MY MIND MUST SORE BETRAY ME!
NOT SO, LASS.
IT'S ALL "HIS" DOING, IT IS. BUT--YOU CANNA KNOW THAT, CAN YOU?
"HIS"? 'TIS TWICE I'VE HEARD THAT WORD!
BLESS YOURSELF IT'S ONLY TWICE, LASSIE.
"HE" BE ALL ABOUT YOU, TWISTIN' AND CHANGIN' THINGS!
FOR "HE" IS A MAD ONE, FOR SURE!
TAKE THE WORD OF SILAS GRANT.
THOU MUST TELL ME MORE.
IT ALL SEEMS SO... MYSTERIOUS.
AYE, AND WE'RE LUCKY IT'S ONLY THAT!
I GUESS I'M THE ONLY ONE WHAT'S SURVIVED THESE CHANGES, LASS...
...ALL THE OTHERS... ARE DEAD.
YOU WANT THE STORY, THEN? A'RIGHT... I'LL TELL YE!
...AND SAINTS, IT'S ENOUGH TO CHILL YER SOUL!
15


MEANWHILE...
THOU SAYEST THY COSMIC WELL ART THE DOUBLE OF MINE OWN?
SO IT SEEMS, KEEPER.
PERHAPS WHEN THE WATERS FROM THE TWO BE BROUGHT TOGETHER--
MY LIEGE! LOOK!
THE GRIM WRECKAGE OF BATTLE!
YEA, MANGOG HATH PASSED THIS WAY-- BUT HO!
WHAT BE THAT SIGHT BEYOND THIS SCENE OF DEATH--?
QUICK STEPS BRING THEM FORWARD, TO THE BRINK...OF A NIGHTMARE!
SUNS! THE VERY MYSTIC BRIDGE ITSELF--
'TIS DISSOLVED, AND BEYOND ITS FINAL WISP-- ASGARD IS GONE!
MILORD, THEN-- ALL THAT WE FEARED, HATH COME TO PASS?
YEA, HOGUN!
ALL, ALL--BE DESTROYED!
MY FATHER, WHAT HAST THOU DONE TO ME?
HAST THOU STOLEN THE PRIVILEGE OF FIGHTING BY THY SIDE--?
--HAST THOU STOLEN FROM ME, THY DYING WORDS?
THY FATHERLY HAND, THY FATHERLY SMILE?
ODIN--I WOULD HAVE FOUGHT WITH THEE! AND NOW--
--NOW I'VE NAUGHT-- BUT THY MEMORY!
16


MILORD, I KNOW THY GRIEF BE GREAT.
...BUT THINK, MILORD. WHERE BE THE WRECKAGE OF THAT ULTIMATE BATTLE?
WHAT MEANEST THOU, FANDRAL?
PERHAPS ASGARD IS NOT DESTROYED.
PERHAPS ODIN, IN HIS WISDOM... HAS GIVEN US THE MEANS...
...OF RETURNING THAT FAIR LAND?
'TIS TOO MUCH TO HOPE. BUT PERHAPS...
THERE BE A UNIVERSAL AFFINITY BETWEEN THE WATERS OF THE COSMIC AND TWILIGHT WELLS.
IF THAT LAND OF GODS STILL EXISTS--
--IN SOME DISTANT CORNER OF THIS UNIVERSE, PROTECTING ALL ELSE FROM MANGOG'S WRATH--
--THEN MY HAMMER, BAPTISED BY THOSE NIGHTBLACK WATERS--
--WILL SEEK OUT THAT COMPANION COSMIC POOL--
--AND WE SHALL TRAVEL-- WITH IT!
SPACE SEEMS TO WARP AROUND THE SPEEDING PILGRIMS, AND THEY FIND THEMSELVES SHIFTING THROUGH THE LEVELS OF DIMENSIONAL TIME--

--FOLLOWING THE ETHEREAL PATH BLESSED ASGARD TOOK, WHEN ODIN WILLED IT GONE FROM THE NORMAL ENTHROPIC UNIVERSE*--
--WILLED IT BEYOND THE FURTHEST GALACTIC BARRIERS, TO A PLACE WHERE NO STAR BURNS, WHERE THE SKY IS SCARLET--
--AND THE BATTLE FOR ASGARD STILL DOTH REIGN!
*SHOWN LAST ISSUE, NATCH.--STAN.
FIRES FILL THE SKY. DO ASGARD'S LEGIONS HERE YET BATTLE?
ODIN MUST HAVE KNOWN THE FIGHT WOULD NOT GO WELL--
--AND SO, REMOVED OUR LAND FROM MEN'S EYES--
WHERE NOW THE WAR WILL NOT DESTROY--ALL WHO LIVE!
STAY BACK! I HEAR THE SOUNDS WE SEEK--!
AND THOSE SOUNDS ARE BRUTAL--
--SOUNDS --OF FURY!
ANTS!! VERMIN!
MINE IS THE POWER OF A RACE ENTIRE--
--AND I SHALL HAVE REVENGE --ON HIM WHO STOLE THEIR LIVES!
'TIS NO USE! THE DEMON IS UNSTOPPABLE!
WE ALL-- SHALL DIE!

IT APPEARS WE ARRIVE IN TIME.
MANGOG HATH YET TO STRIKE THE FATAL BLOW--
--AND IF THUNDER MEANS AUGHT--
--HE NEVER WILL!
AH, 'TIS ODIN'S VITUPEROUS SON!
THOU DOST SHARE THY FATHER'S GUILT, ARROGANT FOOL!
YEA--
WHACK!
--AND HIS GLORY AS WELL!
THOU THINKEST-- THAT BECAUSE THE RACE WHICH SPAWNED ME IN DEATH, NOW LIVES--
--THAT THE DEBT I OWE FOR THEM-- IS OVER?
NEVER!
LOKI'S HAND DID RETURN MY LIFE--
--AND MANGOG STALKS FOR VENGEANCE ONCE MORE-- AAAAAA!
ENOUGH!
I KNOW OF YOU, DEMON..
THROUGH SOME SORCERY, THOU DOST STILL SURVIVE--
--EVEN AFTER THE DYING HATRED OF THAT RACE WHICH CREATED THEE --HATH PASSED.
ODIN RETURNED THEM TO LIFE--


--YET THE HATE THOU DOST EMBODY-- SOMEHOW REMAINS!
AYE! REMAINS-- AND DESTROYS!
THOU ART STRONG, STRANGER--
--BUT NOT QUITE STRONG ENOUGH.
THE EMOTIONS OF A BILLION BILLION BEINGS POWER THIS DEMON'S SHELL--
--AND WILL CRUSH YOU!
AH, THOU STILL DOTH STAND, THUNDER GOD.
EXCELLENT. 'TWILL MAKE MY NEXT MOVE MORE POIGNANT!
THY FATHER WOULD HAVE ENDED MY EXISTENCE--
--WOULD HAVE FINISHED ME FOR ALL TIME, WHEN HE BROUGHT MY MASTERS OUT OF DEATH'S DARK EXILE.
HE SHALL PAY FOR THAT-- AND SO WILT THOU!
HE DID WHAT HE HAD TO DO, MONSTER!
ONCE, THEY BATTLED 'GAINST ASGARD. HIS DUTY WAS CLEAR!*
*ALL THIS HAPPENED WAY BACK IN THOR #154-157. --STAN.

CLEAR? AYE-- CLEAR TO BE A MURDERER!
GIVING THEM BACK THEIR LIVES WAS TRULY NOBLE, AND YET--
--FUTILE!
AS FUTILE AS SHIFTING ASGARD TO THIS LONELY DIMENSION.
IT BUT WEAKENED HIM--
--PREPARING HIM--FOR THE FINAL BLOW!
WHAT SAY YOU NOW, THUNDER GOD? WILL THY FATHER RETURN FROM THE DEAD AS DID MY MASTERS--
--OR BE THIS ODIN'S TRUE END--?
NOW!
NNNOOOOOOO!
NEXT ISSUE:
THE DEATH OF ODIN!
21

THOR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP™
20¢
198
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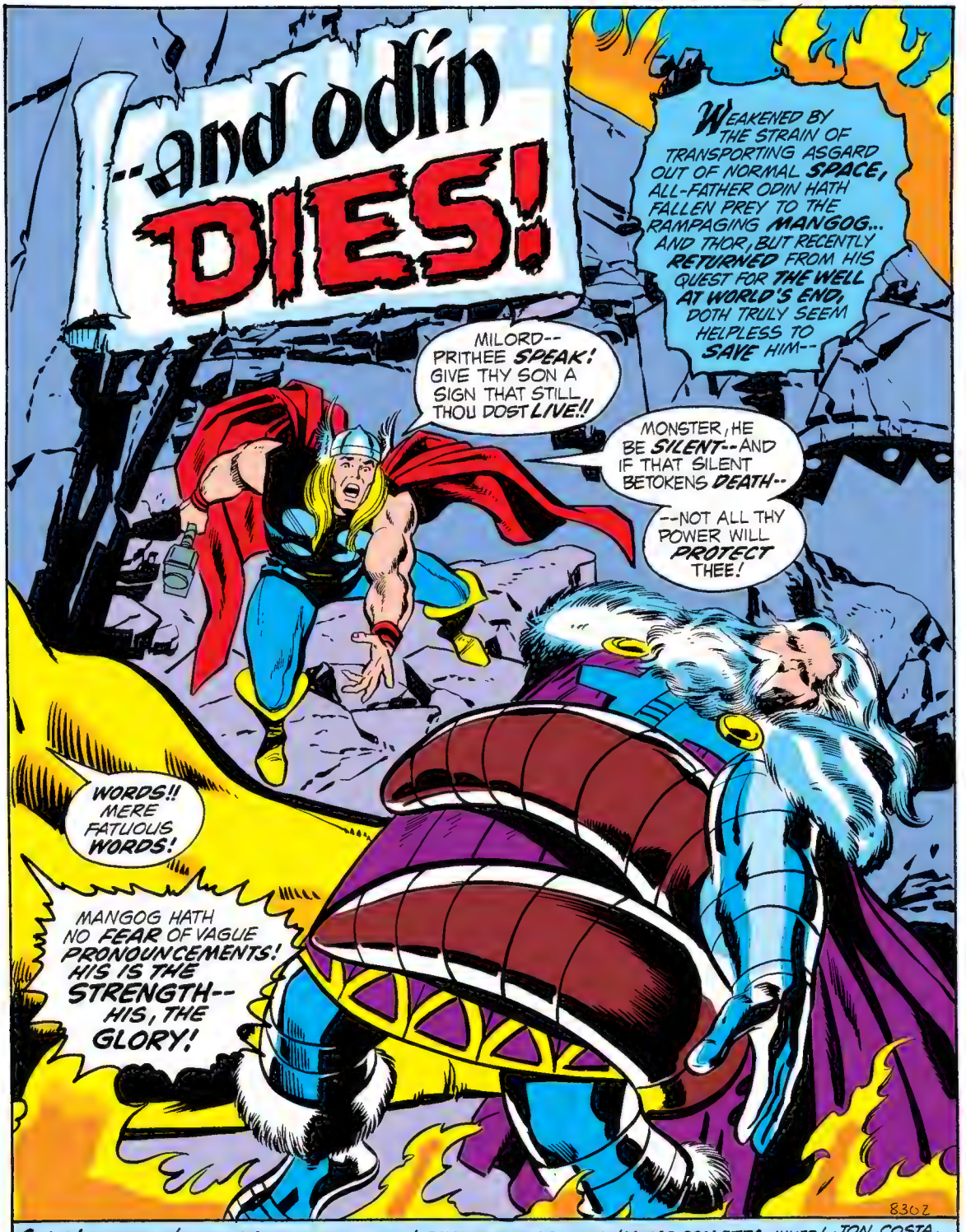
02450
THE MIGHTY
THOR
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
ODIN IS DEAD, THUNDER GOD--
AND YOU SHALL BE NEXT TO DIE!!
WHEN DIES THE IMMORTAL!

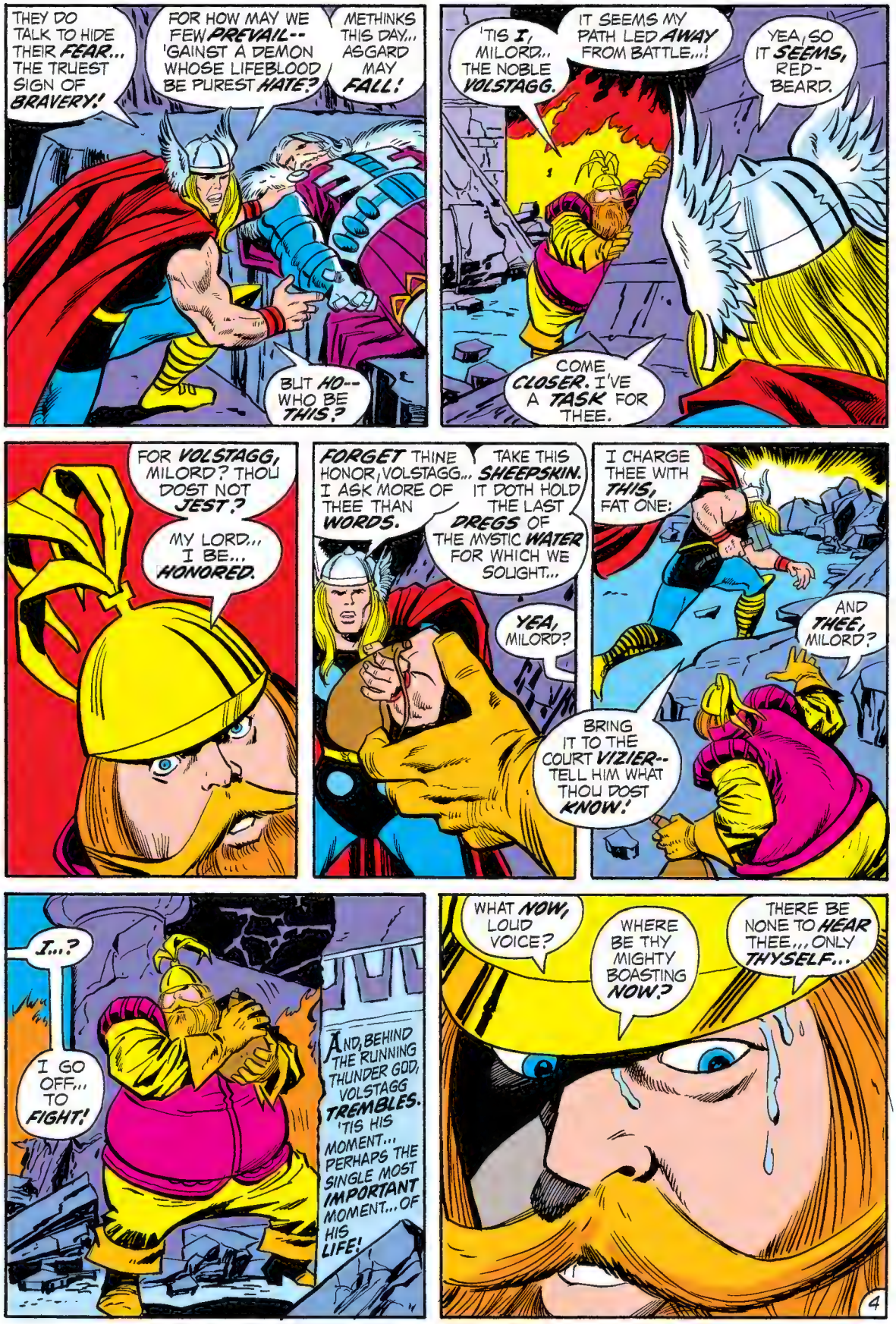
THE MIGHTY THOR!™

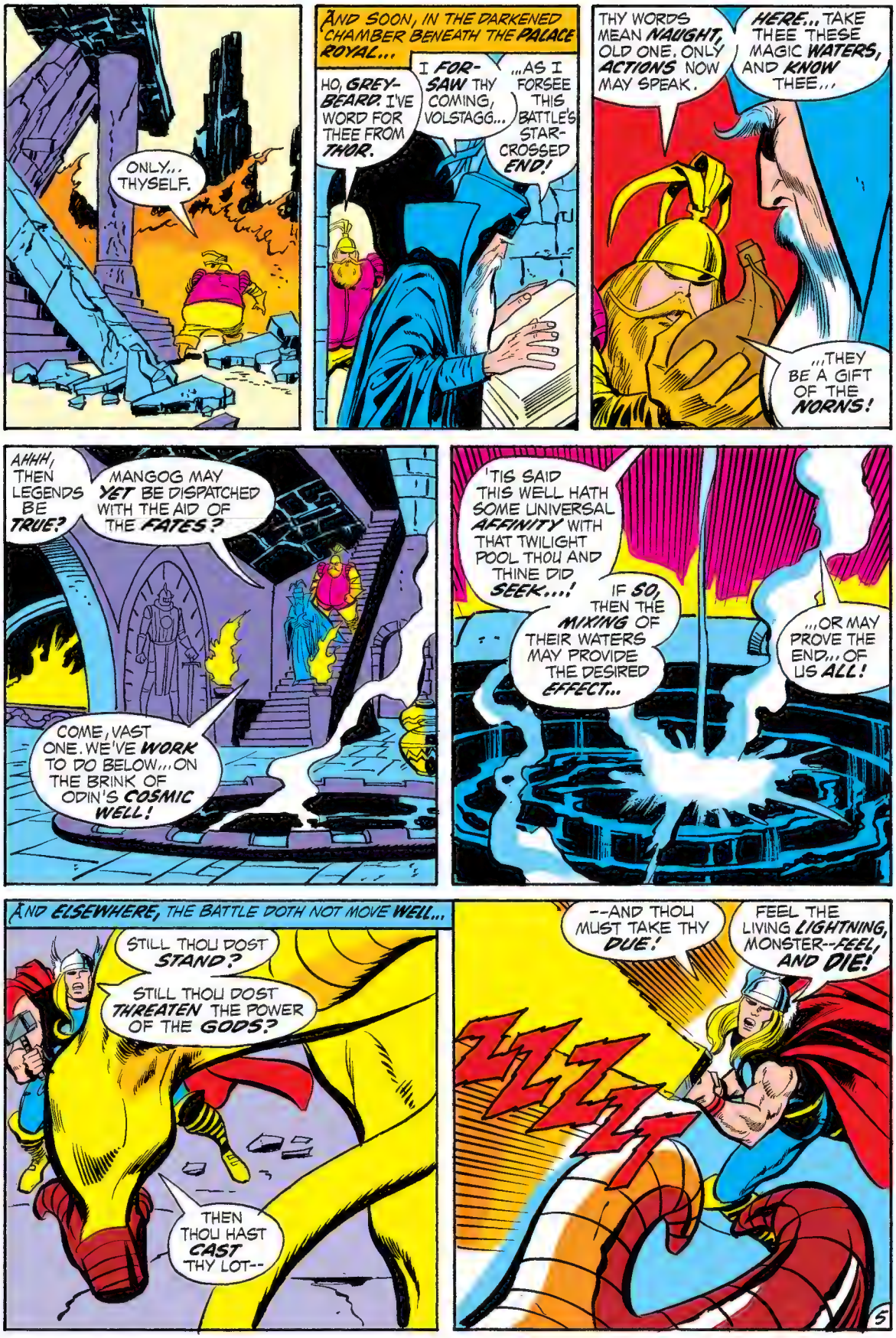

--and odin DIES!
WEAKENED BY THE STRAIN OF TRANSPORTING ASGARD OUT OF NORMAL SPACE, ALL-FATHER ODIN HATH FALLEN PREY TO THE RAMPAGING MANGOG... AND THOR, BUT RECENTLY RETURNED FROM HIS QUEST FOR THE WELL AT WORLD'S END, DOTH TRULY SEEM HELPLESS TO SAVE HIM--
MILORD-- PRITHEE SPEAK! GIVE THY SON A SIGN THAT STILL THOU DOST LIVE!!
MONSTER, HE BE SILENT--AND IF THAT SILENT BETOKENS DEATH--
--NOT ALL THY POWER WILL PROTECT THEE!
WORDS!! MERE FATUOUS WORDS!
MANGOG HATH NO FEAR OF VAGUE PRONOUNCEMENTS! HIS IS THE STRENGTH-- HIS, THE GLORY!
8302

STAN LEE, EDITOR/GERRY CONWAY, SCRIPTER/JOHN BUSCEMA, ARTIST/VINCE COLLETTA, INKER/JON COSTA, LETTERER

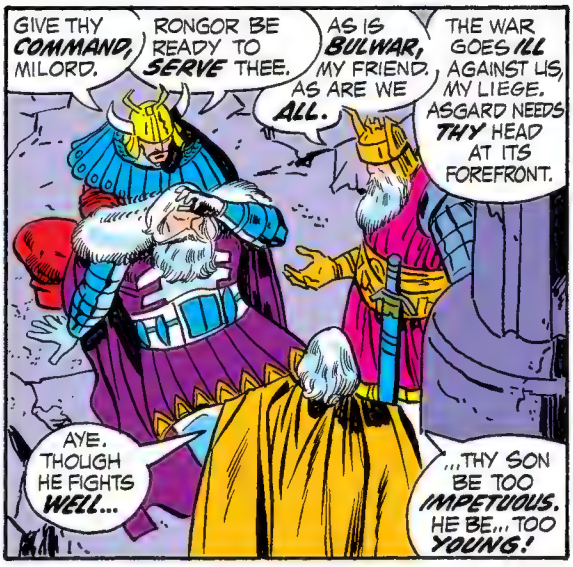
FOR--IF THOU DAREST ATTACK ME--
--THEN THY FATHER DIES-- MORE QUICKLY THAN I PLANNED!
WHAT SAY THEE, THUNDER GOD?
WHAT CAN I SAY, FOUL DEMON?
MY HANDS BE TIED!
NOT SO HOGUN'S, MILORD! WHILST THOU TOOK HIS ATTENTION IN FRONT--
SAK
--HOGUN DID STEAL THE REAR!
WELL DONE, GRIM ONE!
FOR EVEN AS THE MONSTER TURNS HIS HEAD TO THEE--
--THOR DOTH LET FLY HIS MYSTIC MJOLNIR--
--AND TO HIS FATHER'S SIDE DOTH SPEED!
TRICKERY!
FOR THAT THOU SHALT PAY, GNAT--!
2

NAY, MANGOG--'TIS THOU SHALT PAY--
--AND PAY DEARLY--FOR E'ER DARING TO TOUCH LORD ODIN'S SACRED FORM!
MY HAMMER DOTH BUT STUN THEE FOR A MOMENT--
--YET A MOMENT BE ALL I NEED TO REACH THIS LEDGE--AND SAFETY!
ODIN STILL SUFFERS IN DARKNESS, HIS POWERS DRAINED BY RECENT MIGHTY EFFORT.
HE NEEDS TIME TO REST--
--AND THAT TIME SHALL HE HAVE, MY LORD!
NOT FOR NOTHING DID WE BATTLE OUR WAY 'CROSS THAT DISTANT WORLD--
--TO FIND THE FATE-BLESSED WATERS ODIN DID SEND US FOR--!*
*ISSUES 195-197, NATCH--TERSE STAN.
ONLY HE KNOWS THEIR TRUE USE--
AND FOR THIS, AND OTHER THINGS, MUST ODIN SURVIVE!
THOU DOST FOOL NO ONE, HOGUN--LEAST OF ALL, FANDRAL THE FAIR!
THY NOBLE HEART FEARS FOR ODIN'S LIFE--
--AS DOTH MINE--AND EVERY LOYAL ASGARDIAN'S!
3

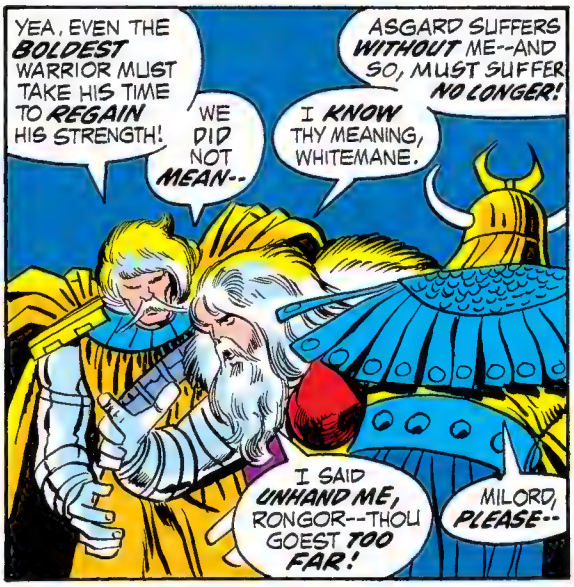

THEY DO TALK TO HIDE THEIR FEAR... THE TRUEST SIGN OF BRAVERY!
FOR HOW MAY WE FEW PREVAIL-- 'GAINST A DEMON WHOSE LIFEBLOOD BE PUREST HATE?
METHINKS THIS DAY,,, ASGARD MAY FALL!
BUT HO-- WHO BE THIS?
'TIS I, MILORD,, THE NOBLE VOLSTAGG.
IT SEEMS MY PATH LED AWAY FROM BATTLE,,,!
YEA, SO IT SEEMS, RED-BEARD.
COME CLOSER. I'VE A TASK FOR THEE.
FOR VOLSTAGG, MILORD? THOU DOST NOT JEST?
MY LORD,, I BE... HONORED.
FORGET THINE HONOR, VOLSTAGG... I ASK MORE OF THEE THAN WORDS.
TAKE THIS SHEEPSKIN. IT DOTH HOLD THE LAST DREGS OF THE MYSTIC WATER FOR WHICH WE SOUGHT...
YEA, MILORD?
I CHARGE THEE WITH THIS, FAT ONE:
AND THEE, MILORD?
BRING IT TO THE COURT VIZIER-- TELL HIM WHAT THOU DOST KNOW!
I...?
I GO OFF,,, TO FIGHT!
AND, BEHIND THE RUNNING THUNDER GOD, VOLSTAGG TREMBLES. 'TIS HIS MOMENT... PERHAPS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT MOMENT... OF HIS LIFE!
WHAT NOW, LOUD VOICE?
WHERE BE THY MIGHTY BOASTING NOW?
THERE BE NONE TO HEAR THEE,,, ONLY THYSELF...
4


ONLY... THYSELF.
AND SOON, IN THE DARKENED CHAMBER BENEATH THE PALACE ROYAL...
HO, GREY-BEARD. I'VE WORD FOR THEE FROM THOR.
I FORE-SAW THY COMING, VOLSTAGG...
...AS I FORSEE THIS BATTLE'S STAR-CROSSED END!
THY WORDS MEAN NAUGHT, OLD ONE. ONLY ACTIONS NOW MAY SPEAK.
HERE... TAKE THEE THESE MAGIC WATERS, AND KNOW THEE...
...THEY BE A GIFT OF THE NORNS!
AHHH, THEN LEGENDS BE TRUE?
MANGOG MAY YET BE DISPATCHED WITH THE AID OF THE FATES?
COME, VAST ONE. WE'VE WORK TO DO BELOW... ON THE BRINK OF ODIN'S COSMIC WELL!
'TIS SAID THIS WELL HATH SOME UNIVERSAL AFFINITY WITH THAT TWILIGHT POOL THOU AND THINE DID SEEK...!
IF SO, THEN THE MIXING OF THEIR WATERS MAY PROVIDE THE DESIRED EFFECT...
...OR MAY PROVE THE END... OF US ALL!
AND ELSEWHERE, THE BATTLE DOTH NOT MOVE WELL...
STILL THOU DOST STAND?
STILL THOU DOST THREATEN THE POWER OF THE GODS?
THEN THOU HAST CAST THY LOT--
--AND THOU MUST TAKE THY DUE!
FEEL THE LIVING LIGHTNING, MONSTER--FEEL, AND DIE!
ZZZZT
5

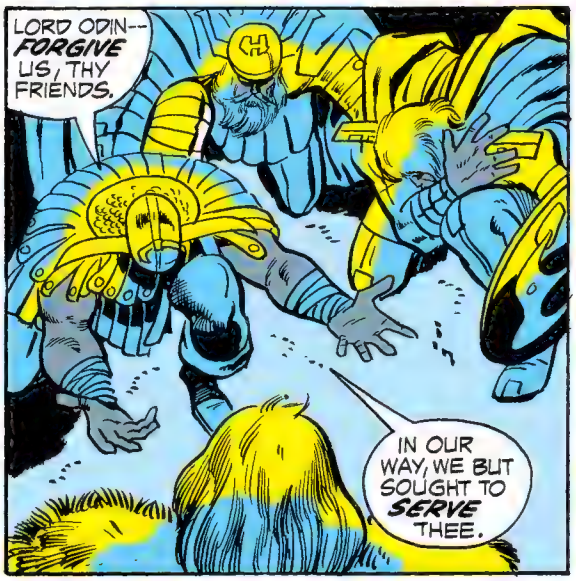
BLIND FOOL! HAST THOU NOT YET GUESSED?
MY BODY THRIVES ON THY MOST POWERFUL BLOWS--
--IT FEEDS ON EVERY CURSE OF HATE!
--FOR MINE BE THE STRENGTH OF A BILLION BILLION BEINGS--
--THE STRENGTH OF THEIR UNDYING ENMITY!
EVEN THOUGH ODIN DID RENEGE ON HIS SENTENCE OF DEATH TO THAT RACE--
--THEIR HATE LIVES ON--
--THEIR HATE-- GIVES ME CAUSE!
HE LIFTS THE VERY ROADWAY ITSELF!
HIS STRENGTH BUILDS BY THE MOMENT!
MILORD-- ARE WE DOOMED?
WHAT HOPE HAVE OUR SWORDS-- 'GAINST SUCH AS HE?
WHAT HOPE INDEED? 'TIS A QUESTION PONDERED BY THREE ELDER GODS AS THEY APPROACH THEIR LORD AND MASTER...
HE LIES MOST STILL.
CAN OUR WORST FEARS BE TRUE?
DOTH ODIN LIE... DEAD?
NAY, HOLD THY TONGUE, RONGOR. HE STIRS!
FATES BE PRAISED, WHITEMANE! OUR LIEGE DOTH LIVE!
6


GIVE THY COMMAND, MILORD.
RONGOR BE READY TO SERVE THEE.
AS IS BULWAR, MY FRIEND. AS ARE WE ALL.
THE WAR GOES ILL AGAINST US, MY LIEGE. ASGARD NEEDS THY HEAD AT ITS FOREFRONT.
AYE. THOUGH HE FIGHTS WELL...
...THY SON BE TOO IMPETUOUS. HE BE... TOO YOUNG!

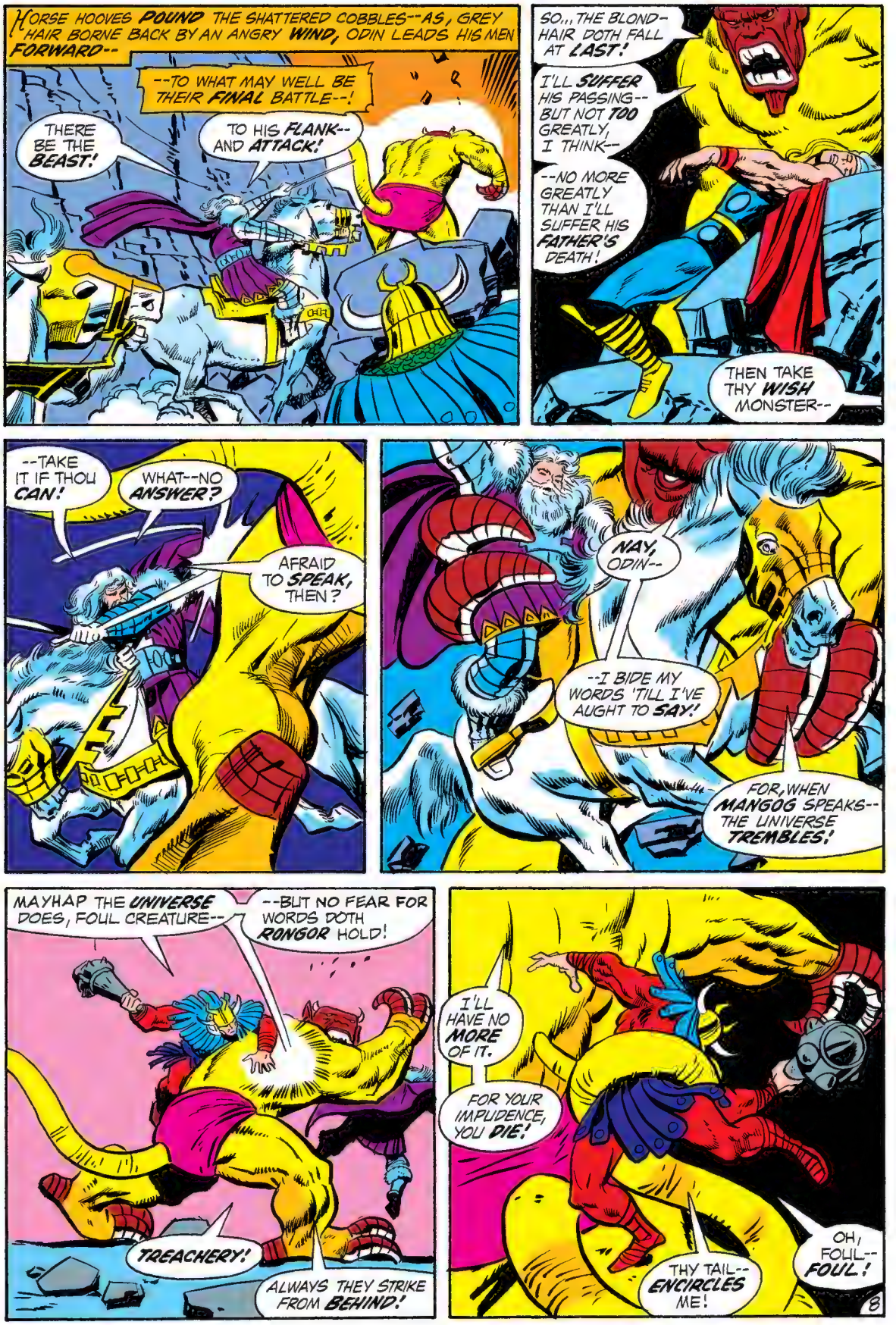
UNHAND ME, THEN.
ODIN NEEDS NO AID. HIS STRENGTH, THOUGH WEAKENED, MAY YET SUSTAIN HIM!
A MOMENT, MY LORD... THOU ART POORLY RESTED.

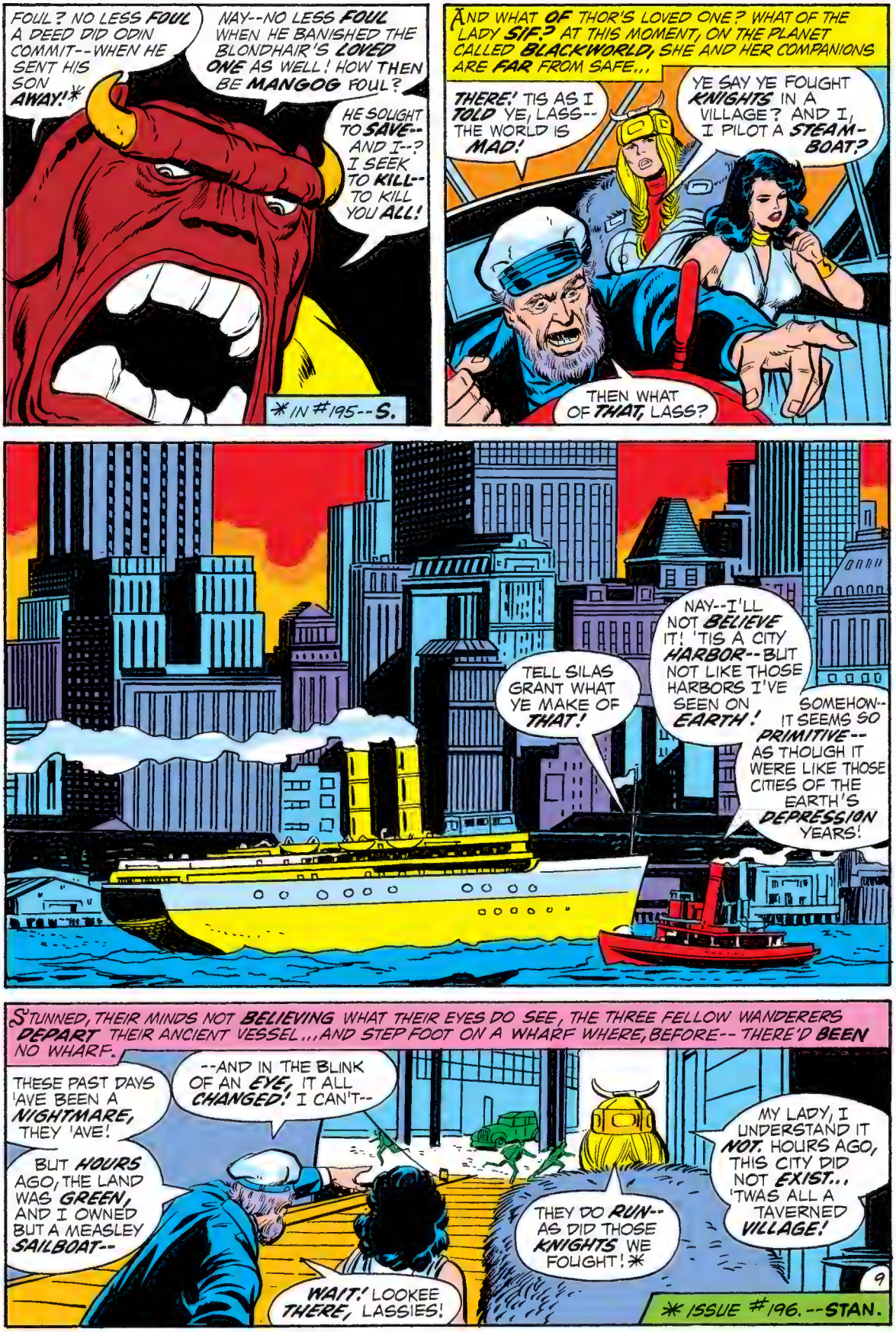

YEA, EVEN THE BOLDEST WARRIOR MUST TAKE HIS TIME TO REGAIN HIS STRENGTH!
WE DID NOT MEAN--
I KNOW THY MEANING, WHITEMANE.
ASGARD SUFFERS WITHOUT ME--AND SO, MUST SUFFER NO LONGER!
I SAID UNHAND ME, RONGOR--THOU GOEST TOO FAR!
MILORD, PLEASE--

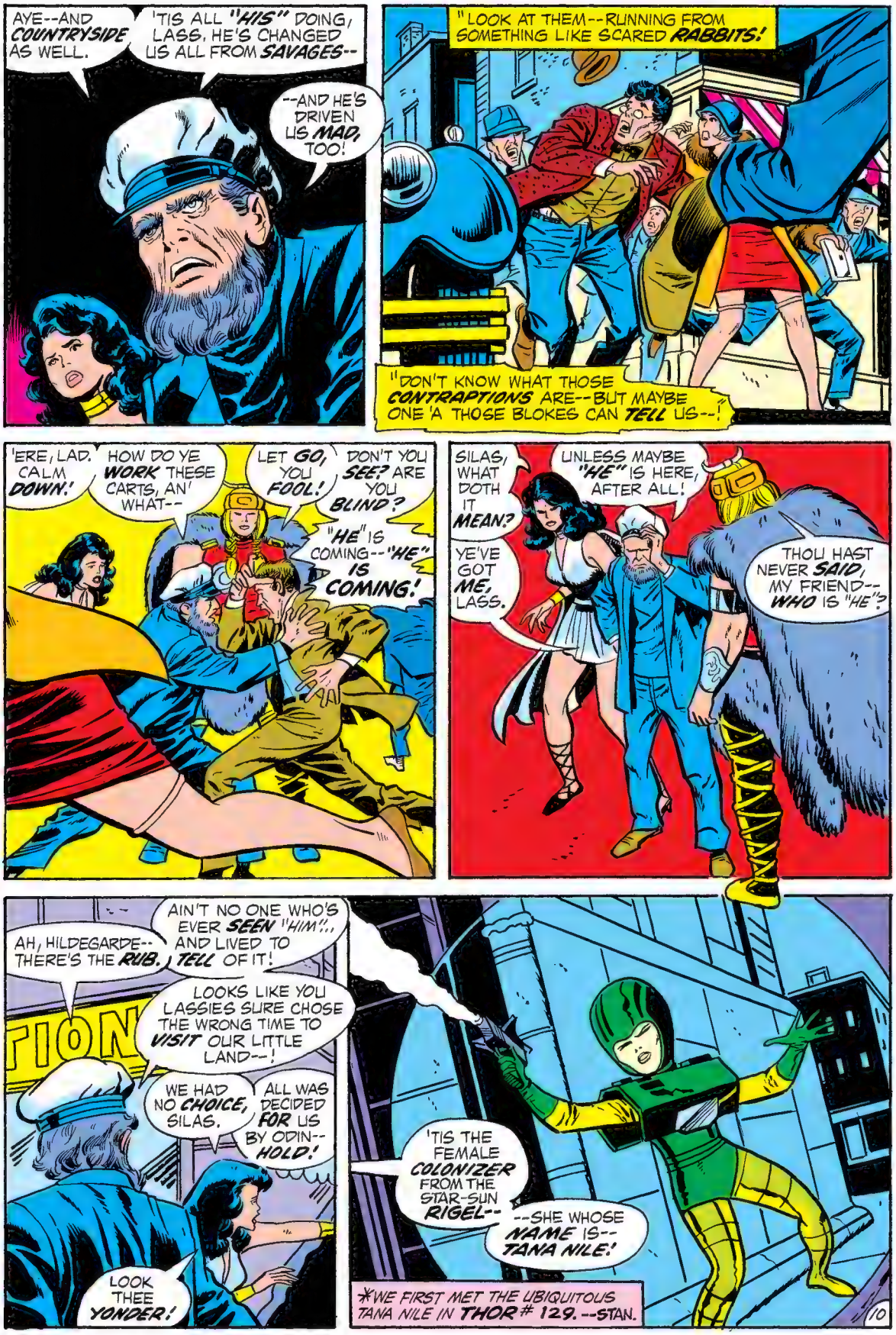
SILENCE!
WHAT MANNER OF KING MIGHT I BE-- IF I ANSWERED NOT THE CALL TO ARMS?
BOW BEFORE THY LIEGE-- LEST THOU DOST FORGET THY PLACE!

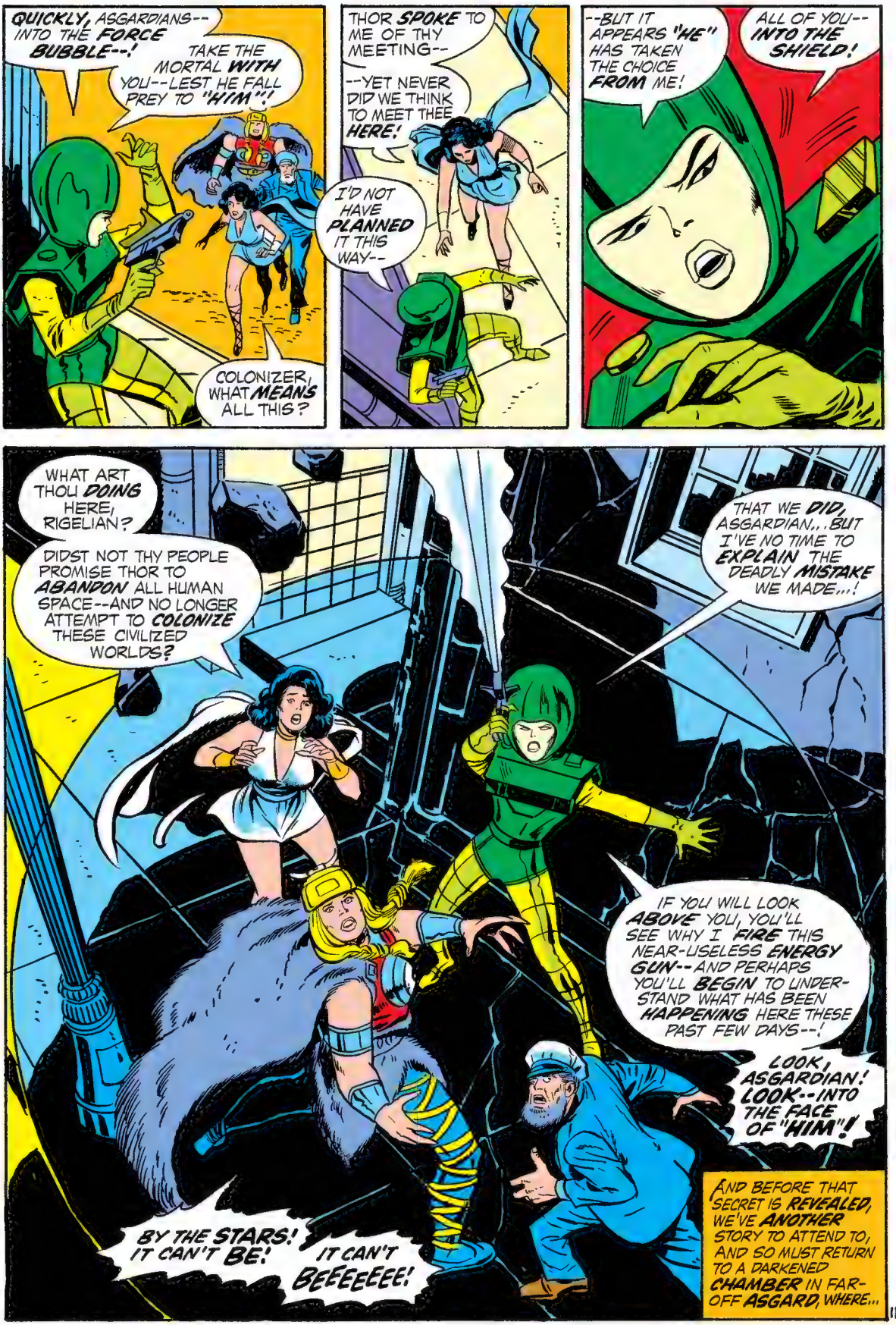

LORD ODIN-- FORGIVE US, THY FRIENDS.
IN OUR WAY, WE BUT SOUGHT TO SERVE THEE.

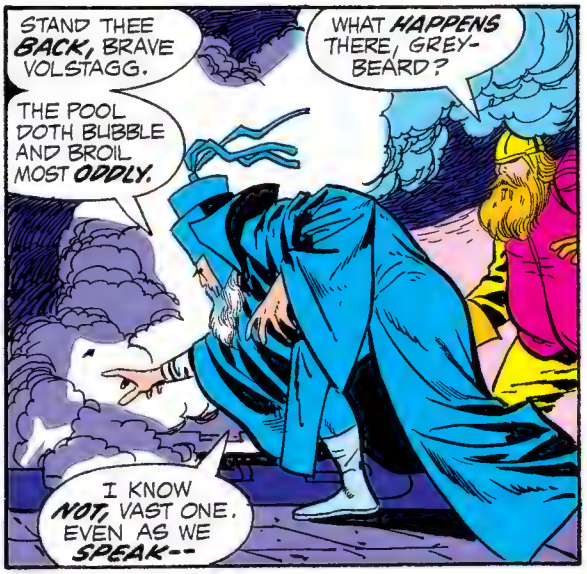
YEA, I KNOW THIS, RONGOR.
LET NO MORE TIME BE WASTED SO, ASGARD NEEDS ITS WARRIORS--
--AND THUS WE GO--TO FIGHT!


HORSE HOOVES POUND THE SHATTERED COBBLES--AS, GREY HAIR BORNE BACK BY AN ANGRY WIND, ODIN LEADS HIS MEN FORWARD--
--TO WHAT MAY WELL BE THEIR FINAL BATTLE--!
THERE BE THE BEAST!
TO HIS FLANK-- AND ATTACK!
SO... THE BLOND-HAIR DOTH FALL AT LAST!
I'LL SUFFER HIS PASSING-- BUT NOT TOO GREATLY, I THINK--
--NO MORE GREATLY THAN I'LL SUFFER HIS FATHER'S DEATH!
THEN TAKE THY WISH MONSTER--
--TAKE IT IF THOU CAN!
WHAT--NO ANSWER?
AFRAID TO SPEAK, THEN?
NAY, ODIN--
--I BIDE MY WORDS 'TILL I'VE AUGHT TO SAY!
FOR, WHEN MANGOG SPEAKS-- THE UNIVERSE TREMBLES!
MAYHAP THE UNIVERSE DOES, FOUL CREATURE--
--BUT NO FEAR FOR WORDS DOTH RONGOR HOLD!
TREACHERY!
ALWAYS THEY STRIKE FROM BEHIND!
I'LL HAVE NO MORE OF IT.
FOR YOUR IMPUDENCE, YOU DIE!
THY TAIL-- ENCIRCLES ME!
OH, FOUL-- FOUL!

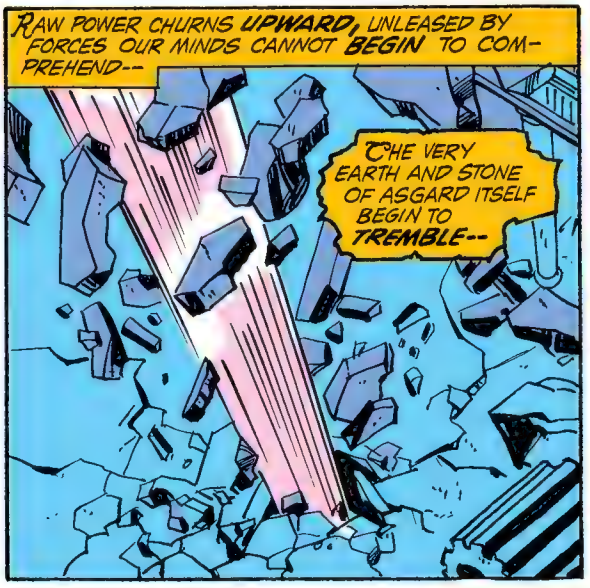

FOUL? NO LESS FOUL A DEED DID ODIN COMMIT--WHEN HE SENT HIS SON AWAY!*
NAY--NO LESS FOUL WHEN HE BANISHED THE BLONDHAIR'S LOVED ONE AS WELL! HOW THEN BE MANGOG FOUL?
HE SOUGHT TO SAVE-- AND I--? I SEEK TO KILL-- TO KILL YOU ALL!
*IN #195--S.
AND WHAT OF THOR'S LOVED ONE? WHAT OF THE LADY SIF? AT THIS MOMENT, ON THE PLANET CALLED BLACKWORLD, SHE AND HER COMPANIONS ARE FAR FROM SAFE...
THERE! TIS AS I TOLD YE, LASS-- THE WORLD IS MAD!
YE SAY YE FOUGHT KNIGHTS IN A VILLAGE? AND I, I PILOT A STEAM-BOAT?
THEN WHAT OF THAT, LASS?
TELL SILAS GRANT WHAT YE MAKE OF THAT!
NAY--I'LL NOT BELIEVE IT! 'TIS A CITY HARBOR--BUT NOT LIKE THOSE HARBORS I'VE SEEN ON EARTH!
SOMEHOW-- IT SEEMS SO PRIMITIVE-- AS THOUGH IT WERE LIKE THOSE CITIES OF THE EARTH'S DEPRESSION YEARS!
STUNNED, THEIR MINDS NOT BELIEVING WHAT THEIR EYES DO SEE, THE THREE FELLOW WANDERERS DEPART THEIR ANCIENT VESSEL...AND STEP FOOT ON A WHARF WHERE, BEFORE-- THERE'D BEEN NO WHARF.
THESE PAST DAYS 'AVE BEEN A NIGHTMARE, THEY 'AVE!
--AND IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, IT ALL CHANGED! I CAN'T--
BUT HOURS AGO, THE LAND WAS GREEN, AND I OWNED BUT A MEASLEY SAILBOAT--
WAIT! LOOKEE THERE, LASSIES!
THEY DO RUN-- AS DID THOSE KNIGHTS WE FOUGHT!*
MY LADY, I UNDERSTAND IT NOT. HOURS AGO, THIS CITY DID NOT EXIST... 'TWAS ALL A TAVERNED VILLAGE!
9
*ISSUE #196.--STAN.

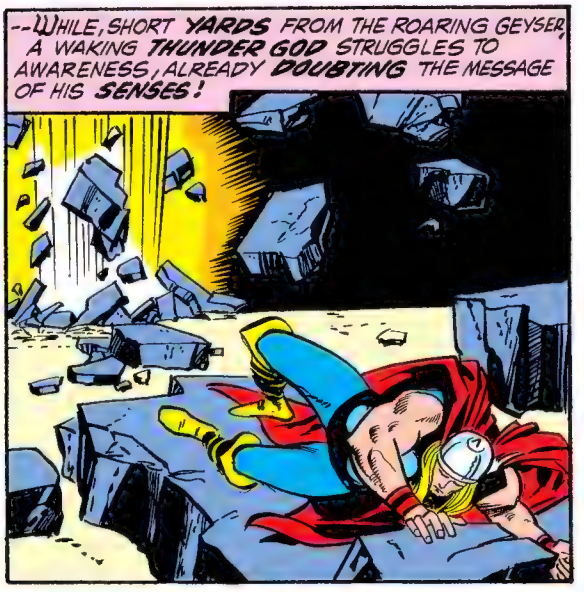

AYE--AND COUNTRYSIDE AS WELL.
'TIS ALL "HIS" DOING, LASS. HE'S CHANGED US ALL FROM SAVAGES--
--AND HE'S DRIVEN US MAD, TOO!
"LOOK AT THEM--RUNNING FROM SOMETHING LIKE SCARED RABBITS!
"DON'T KNOW WHAT THOSE CONTRAPTIONS ARE--BUT MAYBE ONE 'A THOSE BLOKES CAN TELL US--!
'ERE, LAD. CALM DOWN.'
HOW DO YE WORK THESE CARTS, AN' WHAT--
LET GO, YOU FOOL!
DON'T YOU SEE? ARE YOU BLIND?
"HE" IS COMING--"HE" IS COMING!
SILAS, WHAT DOTH IT MEAN?
YE'VE GOT ME, LASS.
UNLESS MAYBE "HE" IS HERE, AFTER ALL!
THOU HAST NEVER SAID, MY FRIEND--WHO IS "HE"?
AH, HILDEGARDE--THERE'S THE RUB.
AIN'T NO ONE WHO'S EVER SEEN "HIM"... AND LIVED TO TELL OF IT!
LOOKS LIKE YOU LASSIES SURE CHOSE THE WRONG TIME TO VISIT OUR LITTLE LAND--!
WE HAD NO CHOICE, SILAS.
ALL WAS DECIDED FOR US BY ODIN--HOLD!
LOOK THEE YONDER!
'TIS THE FEMALE COLONIZER FROM THE STAR-SUN RIGEL--
--SHE WHOSE NAME IS--TANA NILE!
*WE FIRST MET THE UBIQUITOUS TANA NILE IN THOR # 129. --STAN.
10


QUICKLY, ASGARDIANS--INTO THE FORCE BUBBLE--!
TAKE THE MORTAL WITH YOU--LEST HE FALL PREY TO "HIM"!
COLONIZER, WHAT MEANS ALL THIS?
THOR SPOKE TO ME OF THY MEETING--
--YET NEVER DID WE THINK TO MEET THEE HERE!
I'D NOT HAVE PLANNED IT THIS WAY--
--BUT IT APPEARS "HE" HAS TAKEN THE CHOICE FROM ME!
ALL OF YOU--INTO THE SHIELD!
WHAT ART THOU DOING HERE, RIGELIAN?
DIDST NOT THY PEOPLE PROMISE THOR TO ABANDON ALL HUMAN SPACE--AND NO LONGER ATTEMPT TO COLONIZE THESE CIVILIZED WORLDS?
THAT WE DID, ASGARDIAN... BUT I'VE NO TIME TO EXPLAIN THE DEADLY MISTAKE WE MADE...!
IF YOU WILL LOOK ABOVE YOU, YOU'LL SEE WHY I FIRE THIS NEAR-USELESS ENERGY GUN--AND PERHAPS YOU'LL BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING HERE THESE PAST FEW DAYS--!
LOOK, ASGARDIAN! LOOK--INTO THE FACE OF "HIM"!
BY THE STARS! IT CAN'T BE!
IT CAN'T BEEEEEEE!
AND BEFORE THAT SECRET IS REVEALED, WE'VE ANOTHER STORY TO ATTEND TO, AND SO MUST RETURN TO A DARKENED CHAMBER IN FAR-OFF ASGARD, WHERE...

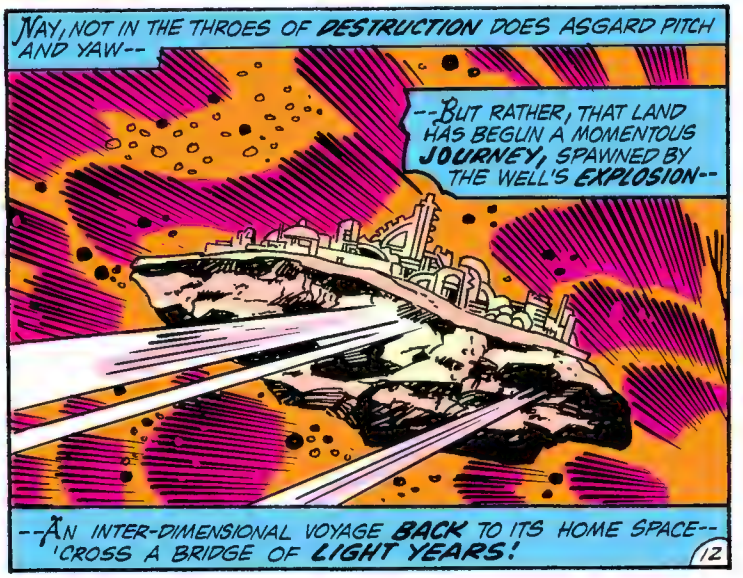

STAND THEE BACK, BRAVE VOLSTAGG.
WHAT HAPPENS THERE, GREY-BEARD?
THE POOL DOTH BUBBLE AND BROIL MOST ODDLY.
I KNOW NOT, VAST ONE. EVEN AS WE SPEAK--

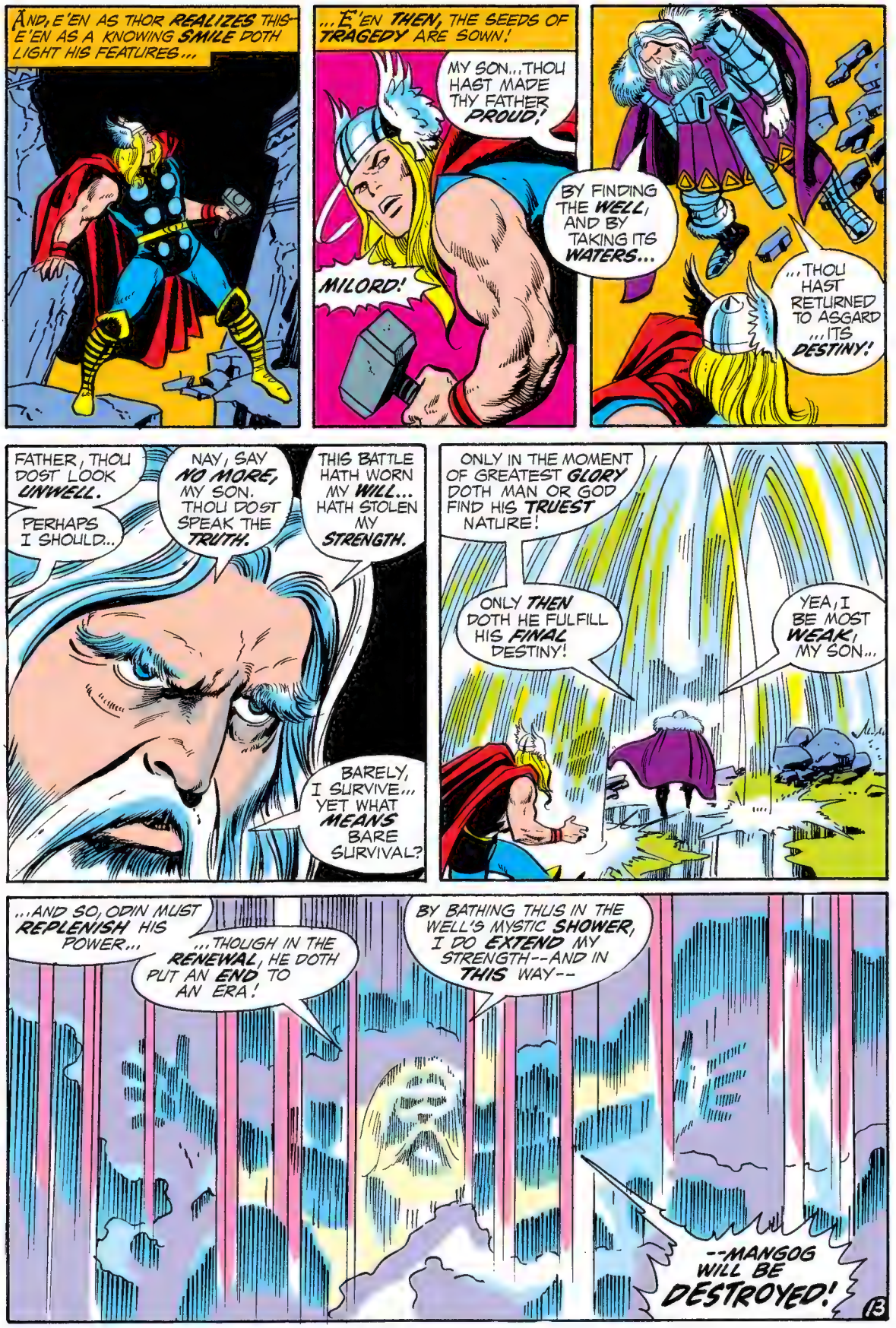
AND, AS THE VIZIER COMPLETES HIS SENTENCE, THE WORDS ARE LOST--
--AS, SUDDENLY, THE WELL EXPLODES!

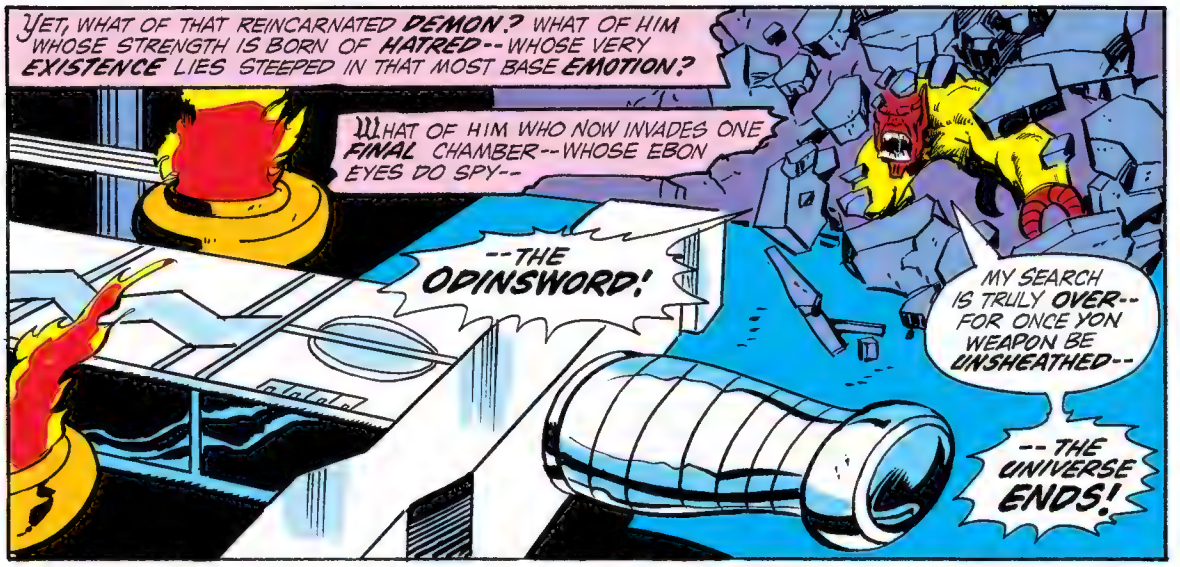

RAW POWER CHURNS UPWARD, UNLEASED BY FORCES OUR MINDS CANNOT BEGIN TO COMPREHEND--
THE VERY EARTH AND STONE OF ASGARD ITSELF BEGIN TO TREMBLE--

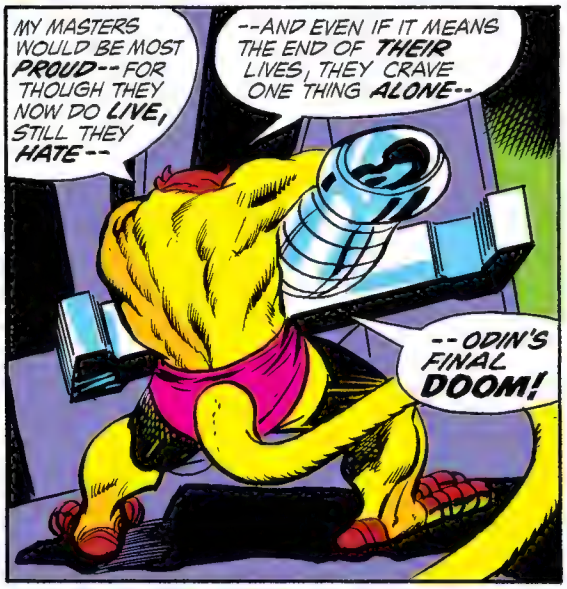

--WHILE, SHORT YARDS FROM THE ROARING GEYSER, A WAKING THUNDER GOD STRUGGLES TO AWARENESS, ALREADY DOUBTING THE MESSAGE OF HIS SENSES!

THE WORLD SHAKES-- TORN FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT!
WHAT FURY HAVE I UNWITTINGLY RELEASED?
WHAT IF THOR'S ORDERS HAVE NOT SAVED ASGARD FROM ITS FATE--BUT MERELY SEALED THAT AWFUL DOOM?

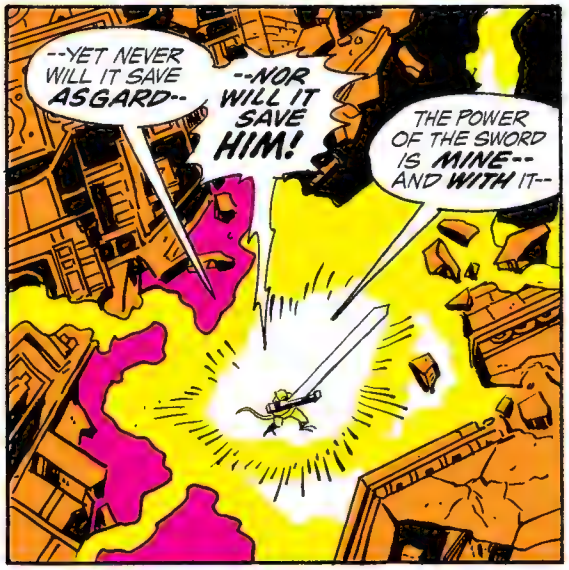

NAY, NOT IN THE THROES OF DESTRUCTION DOES ASGARD PITCH AND YAW--
--BUT RATHER, THAT LAND HAS BEGUN A MOMENTOUS JOURNEY, SPAWNED BY THE WELL'S EXPLOSION--
--AN INTER-DIMENSIONAL VOYAGE BACK TO ITS HOME SPACE-- 'CROSS A BRIDGE OF LIGHT YEARS!


AND, E'EN AS THOR REALIZES THIS E'EN AS A KNOWING SMILE DOTH LIGHT HIS FEATURES...
...E'EN THEN, THE SEEDS OF TRAGEDY ARE SOWN!
MY SON...THOU HAST MADE THY FATHER PROUD!
MILORD!
BY FINDING THE WELL, AND BY TAKING ITS WATERS...
...THOU HAST RETURNED TO ASGARD ...ITS DESTINY!
FATHER, THOU DOST LOOK UNWELL.
PERHAPS I SHOULD...
NAY, SAY NO MORE, MY SON. THOU DOST SPEAK THE TRUTH.
THIS BATTLE HATH WORN MY WILL... HATH STOLEN MY STRENGTH.
BARELY, I SURVIVE... YET WHAT MEANS BARE SURVIVAL?
ONLY IN THE MOMENT OF GREATEST GLORY DOTH MAN OR GOD FIND HIS TRUEST NATURE!
ONLY THEN DOTH HE FULFILL HIS FINAL DESTINY!
YEA, I BE MOST WEAK, MY SON...
...AND SO, ODIN MUST REPLENISH HIS POWER...
...THOUGH IN THE RENEWAL, HE DOTH PUT AN END TO AN ERA!
BY BATHING THUS IN THE WELL'S MYSTIC SHOWER, I DO EXTEND MY STRENGTH--AND IN THIS WAY--
--MANGOG WILL BE DESTROYED!
13


YET, WHAT OF THAT REINCARNATED DEMON? WHAT OF HIM WHOSE STRENGTH IS BORN OF HATRED--WHOSE VERY EXISTENCE LIES STEEPED IN THAT MOST BASE EMOTION?
WHAT OF HIM WHO NOW INVADES ONE FINAL CHAMBER--WHOSE EBON EYES DO SPY--
--THE ODINSWORD!
MY SEARCH IS TRULY OVER--FOR ONCE YON WEAPON BE UNSHEATHED--
--THE UNIVERSE ENDS!

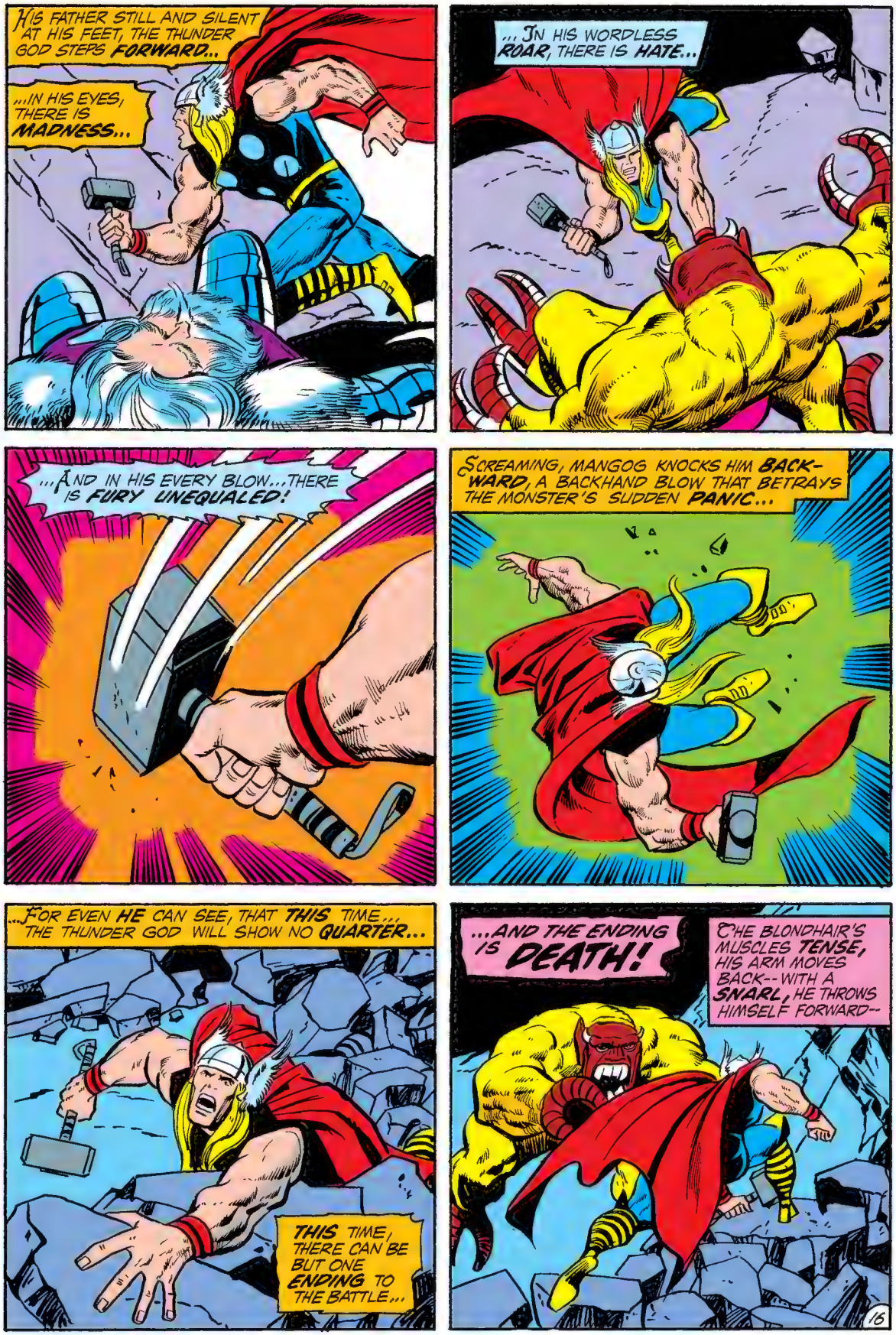

MY MASTERS WOULD BE MOST PROUD--FOR THOUGH THEY NOW DO LIVE, STILL THEY HATE--
--AND EVEN IF IT MEANS THE END OF THEIR LIVES, THEY CRAVE ONE THING ALONE--
--ODIN'S FINAL DOOM!

BUT WHAT MADNESS BE THIS? THE SWORD BE FREE--YET THE WORLD REMAINS!
AIIIIEEE! FOOL THAT I BE--I FORGET WE BE BEYOND NORMAL SPACE AND TIME!
ODIN'S GAMBIT HATH SAVED THE UNIVERSE--


--YET NEVER WILL IT SAVE ASGARD--
--NOR WILL IT SAVE HIM!
THE POWER OF THE SWORD IS MINE--AND WITH IT--

--I'LL DESTROY IT ALL!

I SAY THEE NAY!
NEVER WHILE ODIN STANDS-- WILL ASGARD FALL!
STAY THEE BACK, DEMON--LEST THOU FACE MY WRATH!
THY WRATH? LITTLE MAN, THOU ART BLIND!
THE SWORD IS HELD BY ME--
--AND NOW, AT LAST--THE SWORD SHALL STRIKE!
NEVER!
THOUGH IT DRAINS THE LAST OF MY STRENGTH--
--I'LL CUT THEE FROM THY MASTER'S HATE-- DOOMING THEE TO THYSELF--
--AND, WITH THE SELFSAME SPELL, SEND MINE ODINSWORD WINGING TO ITS SHEATH!
FOR ONE MADDENING INSTANT, THE CHAMBER QUAKES--
--AND THEN THE POWER FADES, THE ROARING DIES--AND WITH A FADING SIGH, THE MIGHTY ODIN DOTH COLLAPSE!
FAAAAATHERRR!
DEMON!
NOW THOU HAST GONE TOO FAR!
15


His father still and silent at his feet, the thunder god steps forward...
...in his eyes, there is madness...
...In his wordless roar, there is hate...
...And in his every blow...there is fury unequaled!
Screaming, mangog knocks him backward, a backhand blow that betrays the monster's sudden panic...
...for even he can see, that this time... the thunder god will show no quarter...
this time, there can be but one ending to the battle...
...and the ending is death!
The blondhair's muscles tense, his arm moves back--with a snarl, he throws himself forward--
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--AND HE STRIKES!
WHAM!
THAT BE FOR MY FATHER, BEAST--ONE WHOSE GLORY DWARFS THY PETTY BATTLE-LOVE--
--ONE WHOSE VERY SHADOW SWALLOWS THY MEAGER FORM!
SOK
AND THAT TOO BE FOR MY FATHER, FILTH--
--HE WHOM THOU DARED TOUCH--
--WHOSE LIFE THOU DARED THREATEN!
BUT WHAT INSANITY IS THIS?
WITH MINE EVERY BLOW-- THE MONSTER GROWS SMALLER--
--HIS SIZE DIMINISHING, DWINDLING IN STATURE AND STRENGTH--!
BY HELA'S DARK HAND--
--CAN MY EYES DECEIVE ME SO? THOU ART THE SIZE OF A CHILD--!
'TIS A TRICK--AN EVIL TRICK! I BE MANGOG--
--MANGOG, WHO NONE CAN DESTROY!
MAYHAP WHAT THOU DOST SAY BE TRUE--

--MAYHAP NONE MAY DESTROY THEE--BUT THYSELF.
LIES--LIES! I WALK AS A GIANT AMONG MEN--!
WHAT'S THAT THOU SAYEST? THOU DOTH SPEAK TOO LOW!
--THOU ART CONSUMING WHAT POWER THOU HAST LEFT!
WITH THE THREAD OF ENERGY THAT BOUND THEE TO THY MASTER'S BROKEN--
I'M A GIANT! THOU ART TRICKING ME--I'M A GIANT!
CAREFUL, DEMON, LEST THOU DOST BURN UP THY EXISTENCE--
--AND BY SO DOING--
--VANISH AWAY.
HE STANDS STARING AT HIS EMPTY PALM, THEN CLENCHES HIS FIST AND TURNS... AND FEELS A SUDDEN CHILL RUN HIS SPINE...
WHY STAND THOU ALL SO SOMBER?
VOLSTAGG--WHAT DOST THOU HIDE?
MILORD, WE PRITHEE--DO NOT LOOK.
THY FATHER--
HE BE DEAD.
ODINNNNNNNN!
AND FOR MANY MOMENTS, HIS VOICE ECHOES, AND FINALLY, MERCIFULLY, FADES.

From the east, there comes a wind most **cold**--bitter, whipping the nightblack **standards** on their silver poles--!

Though Asgard still doth **voyage** to its home dimension, these men care not--their souls are filled with **grief**, their eyes downcast with the weight of **tears**--

And when the tomb is **sealed**, and Odin lies within...

Milord, I know thy **pain**. 'Tis not **easy**...

'Twas never **meant** to be a time of joy.

Thou dost speak most **smoothly**, Hogun.

Too smooth, I think.

Thinkest thou my words too **glib**?

Thunder God, thou art not the **only** son whose father must needs lie **dead**--!

Their liege is dead. The night is **grim**.

They move to a silent **cadence**, the only sound the rustle of moving cloth, the soft shifting of ebon **shields**.

All are there. **All** are silent. Their grief is much to **bear**.

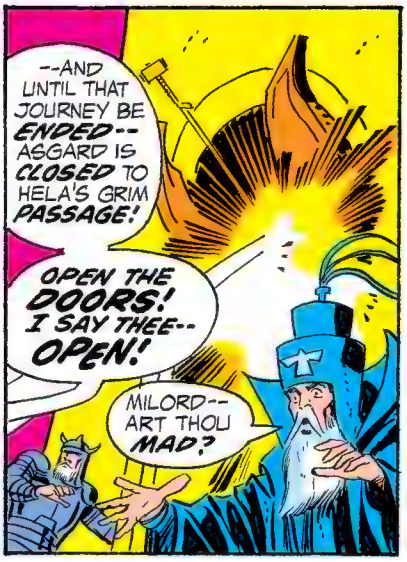
Dead? Nay, not till the suns die in the **heavens**--

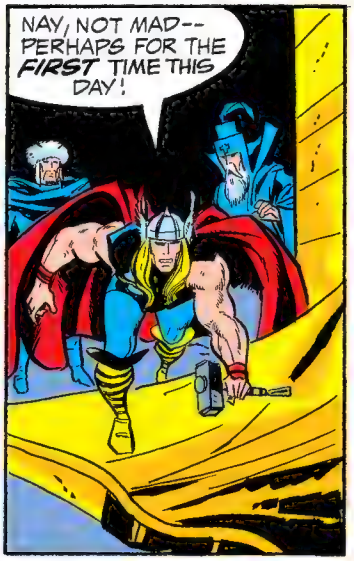
--ne'er will Odin be dead, so long as **one** there lives who **remembers** him!

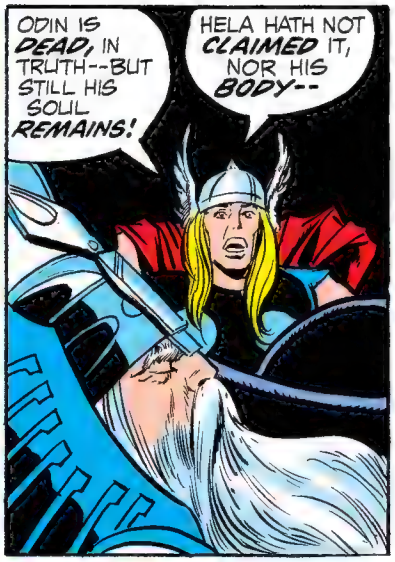
But **wait**--! Are we fools **all**? By my father's sacred **sceptre**--what have we **done**?

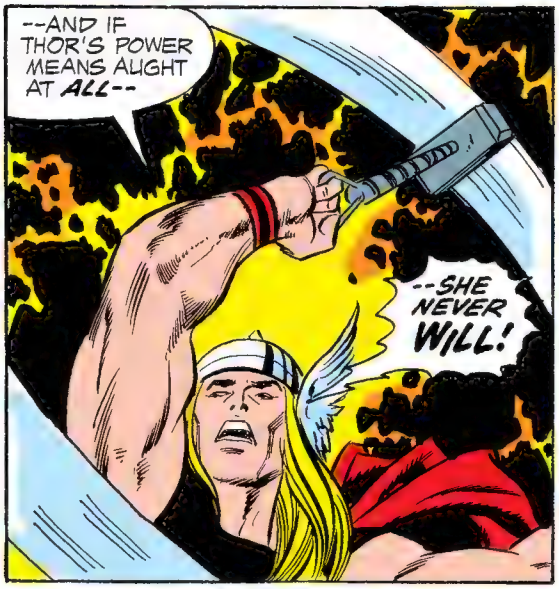
Where be the goddess of **death**--hath she **claimed** his blessed **soul**?

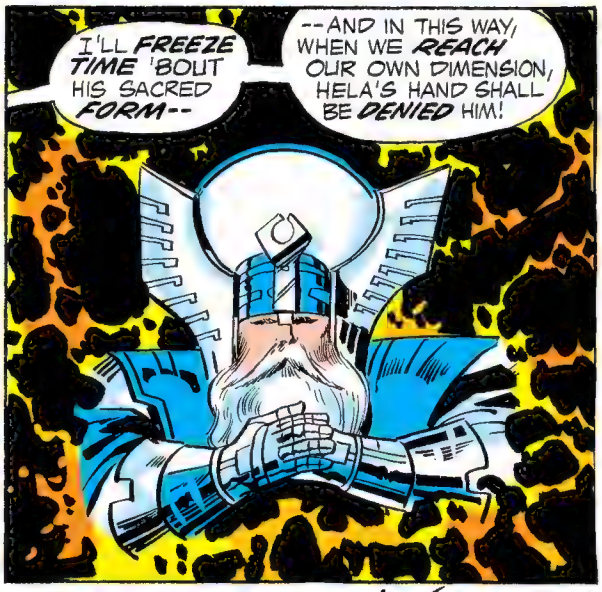
Nay, for we still do **journey** 'twixt the worlds of **time and space**--

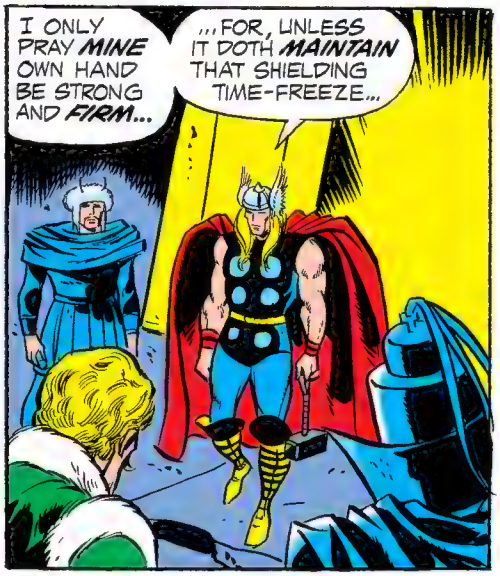


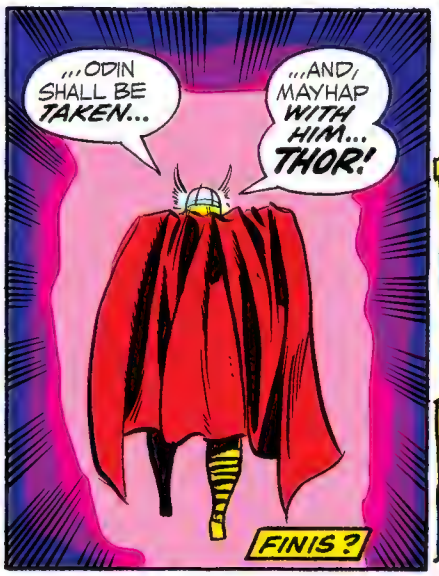












Next issue:
DEATH'S DARK DOMAIN

THOR MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

20¢ CC 199 MAY 02450

THE MIGHTY THOR™

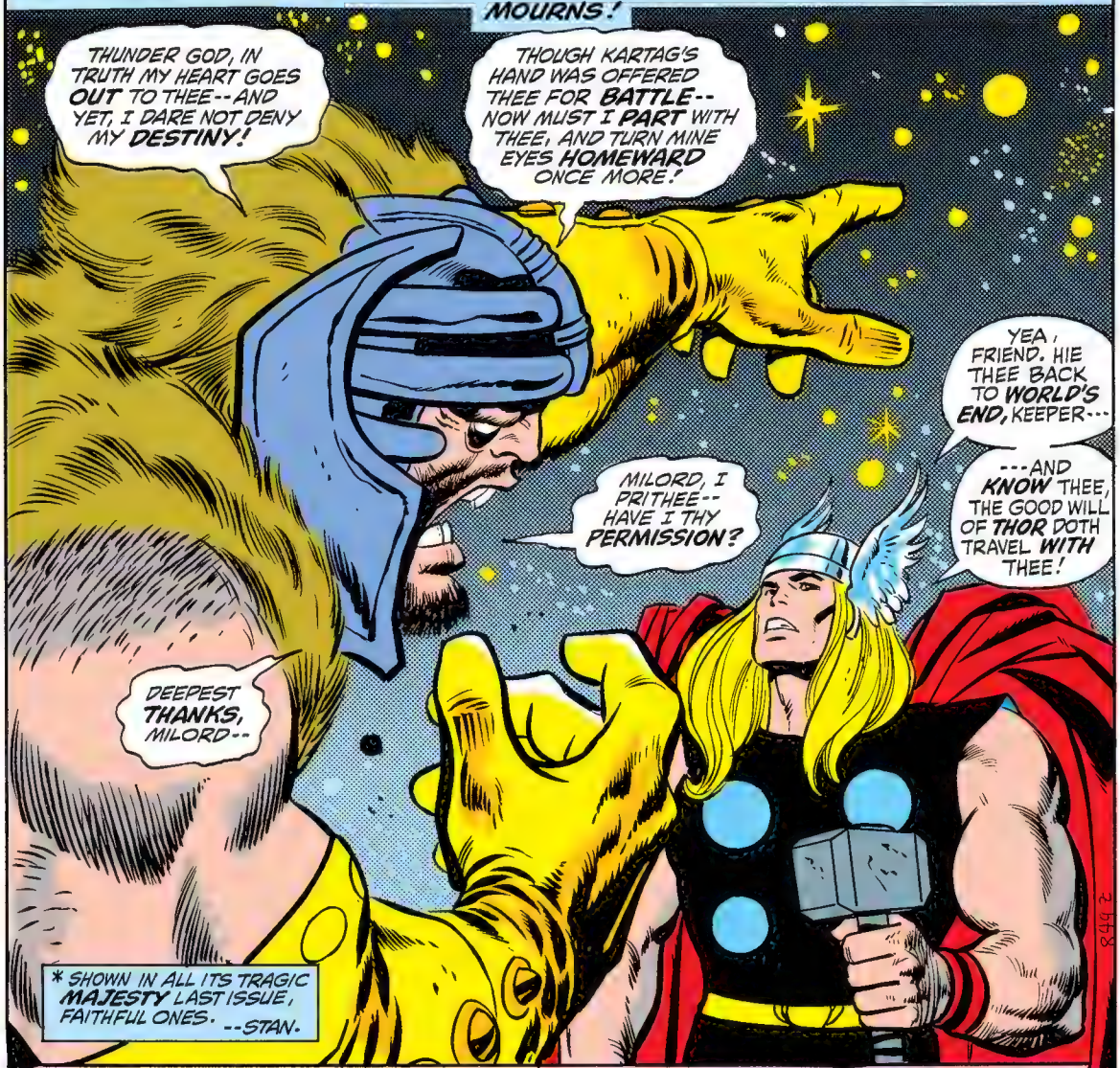
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

DEATH TO THE LEGIONS OF PLUTO!

THE MIGHTY THOR!™

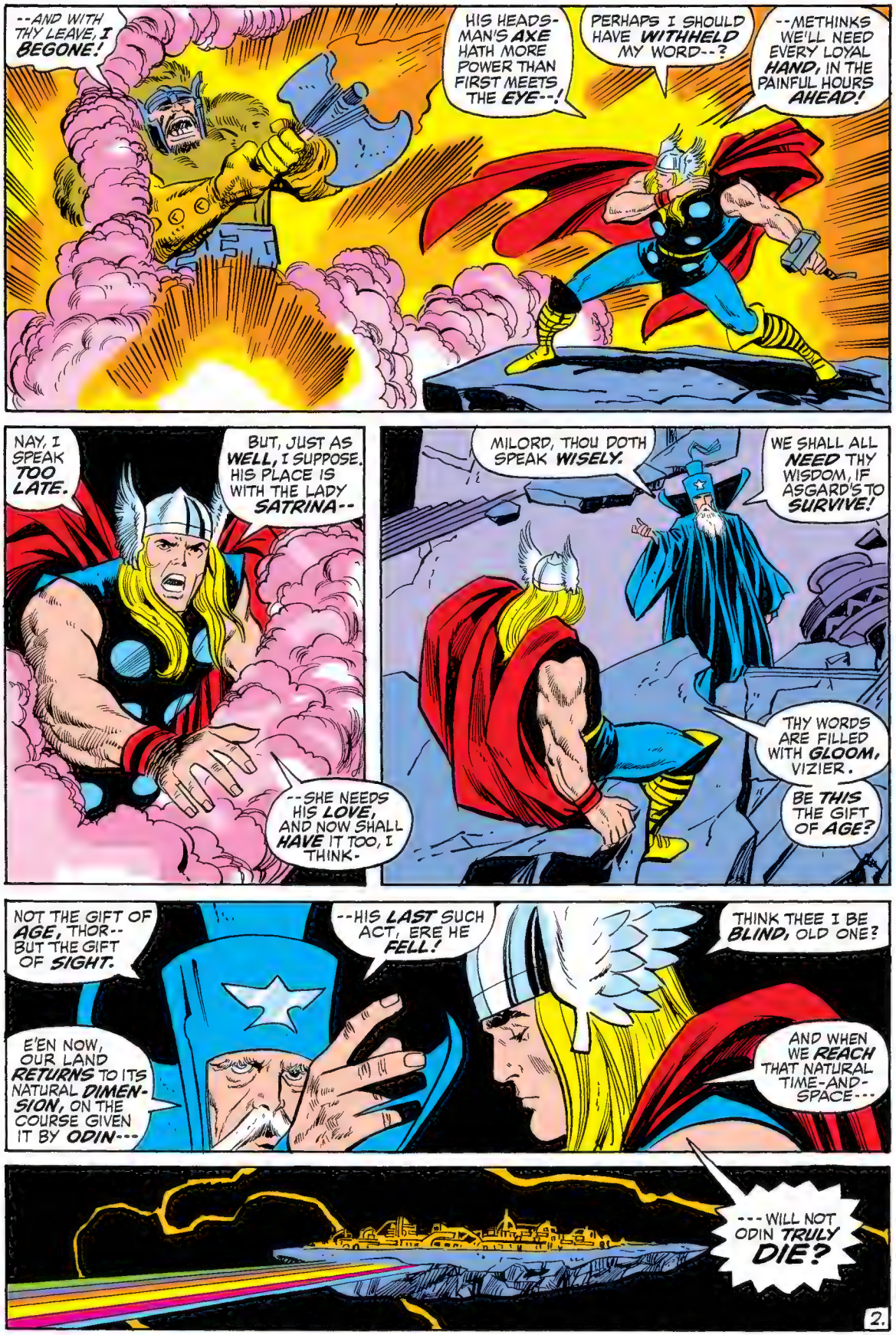
IF THIS BE DEATH...!

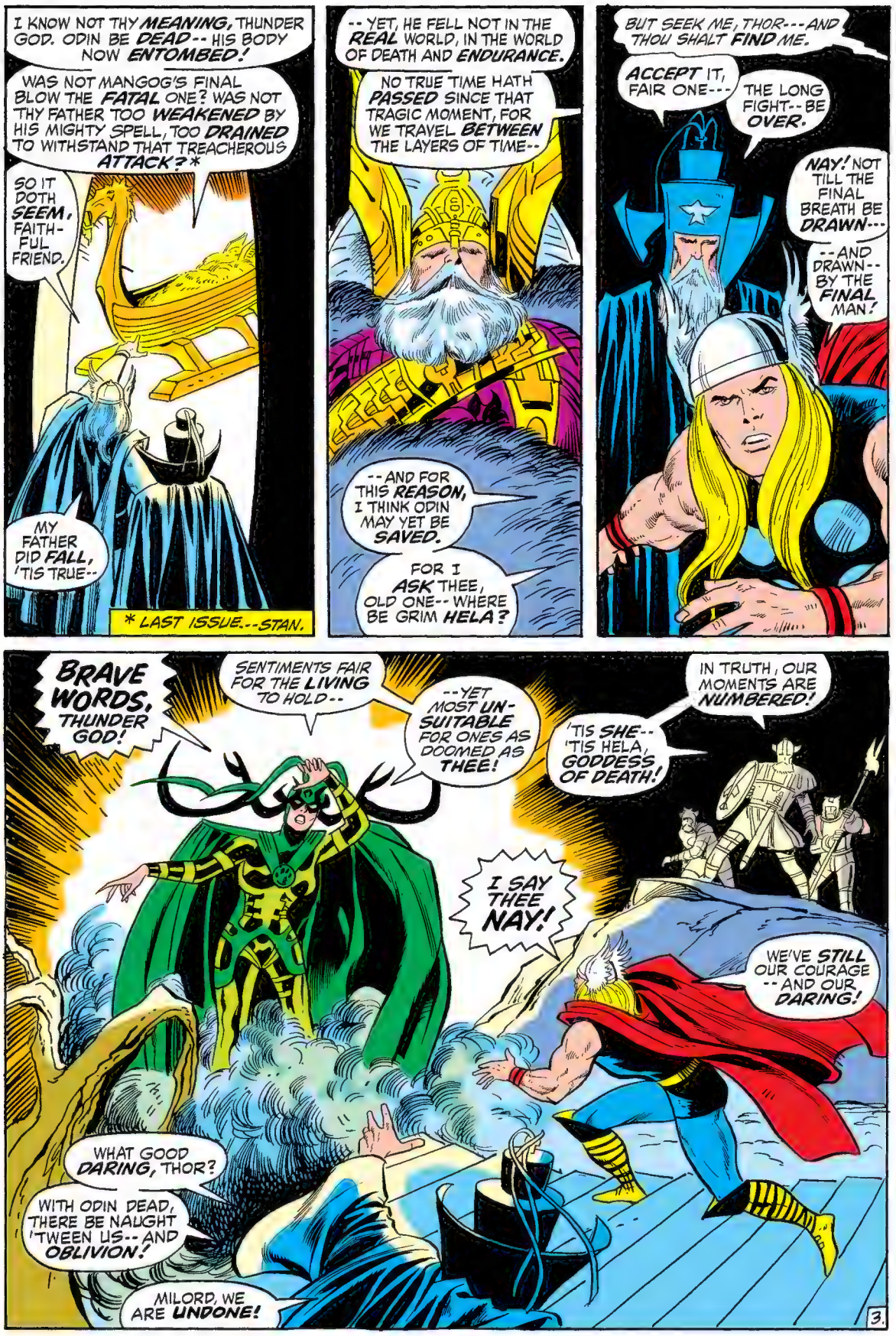
'MIDST VICTORY DWELLS **DEFEAT!** WORDS MOST **TRUE,** FOR, EVEN AS THOR DID DULY **VANQUISH** THE RAMPAGING MANGOG, HIS NOBLE FATHER SUCCUMBED TO FATAL **WEAKNESS*** -- AND NOW DOTH LIE SEEMINGLY **LIFELESS,** WHILST ALL ASGARD **MOURNS!**


THUNDER GOD, IN TRUTH MY HEART GOES OUT TO THEE -- AND YET, I DARE NOT DENY MY DESTINY!
THOUGH KARTAG'S HAND WAS OFFERED THEE FOR BATTLE -- NOW MUST I PART WITH THEE, AND TURN MINE EYES HOMEWARD ONCE MORE!
YEA, FRIEND. HIE THEE BACK TO WORLD'S END, KEEPER---
---AND KNOW THEE, THE GOOD WILL OF THOR DOTH TRAVEL WITH THEE!
MILORD, I PRITHEE -- HAVE I THY PERMISSION?
DEEPEST THANKS, MILORD --

* SHOWN IN ALL ITS TRAGIC MAJESTY LAST ISSUE, FAITHFUL ONES. --STAN.

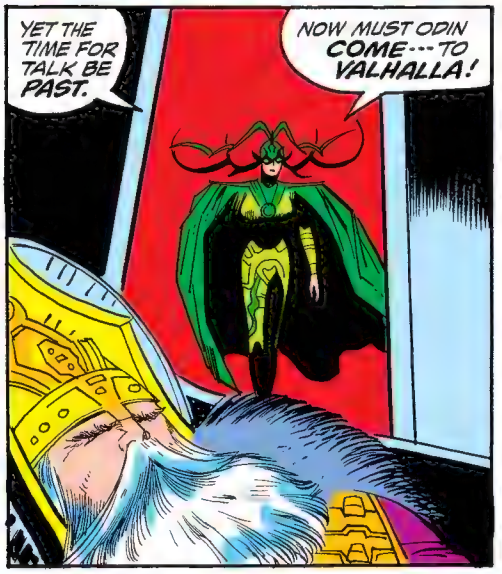
STAN LEE	GERRY CONWAY	JOHN BUSCEMA	VINNIE COLLETTA	SAM ROSEN
EDITOR	WRITER	ARTIST	INKER	LETTERER

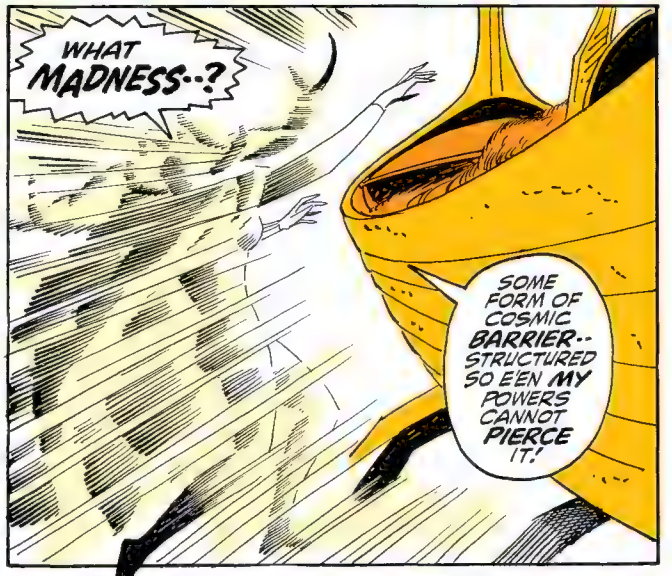

--AND WITH THY LEAVE, I BEGONE!
HIS HEADSMAN'S AXE HATH MORE POWER THAN FIRST MEETS THE EYE--!
PERHAPS I SHOULD HAVE WITHHELD MY WORD--?
--METHINKS WE'LL NEED EVERY LOYAL HAND, IN THE PAINFUL HOURS AHEAD!
NAY, I SPEAK TOO LATE.
BUT, JUST AS WELL, I SUPPOSE. HIS PLACE IS WITH THE LADY SATRINA--
--SHE NEEDS HIS LOVE, AND NOW SHALL HAVE IT TOO, I THINK-
MILORD, THOU DOTH SPEAK WISELY.
WE SHALL ALL NEED THY WISDOM, IF ASGARD'S TO SURVIVE!
THY WORDS ARE FILLED WITH GLOOM, VIZIER.
BE THIS THE GIFT OF AGE?
NOT THE GIFT OF AGE, THOR-- BUT THE GIFT OF SIGHT.
--HIS LAST SUCH ACT, ERE HE FELL!
THINK THEE I BE BLIND, OLD ONE?
E'EN NOW, OUR LAND RETURNS TO ITS NATURAL DIMENSION, ON THE COURSE GIVEN IT BY ODIN---
AND WHEN WE REACH THAT NATURAL TIME-AND-SPACE---
--- WILL NOT ODIN TRULY DIE?
2.

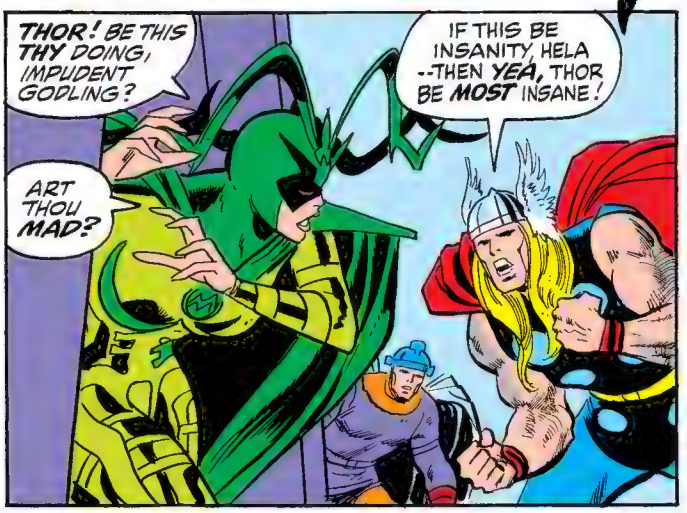

I KNOW NOT THY MEANING, THUNDER GOD. ODIN BE DEAD-- HIS BODY NOW ENTOMBED!
WAS NOT MANGOG'S FINAL BLOW THE FATAL ONE? WAS NOT THY FATHER TOO WEAKENED BY HIS MIGHTY SPELL, TOO DRAINED TO WITHSTAND THAT TREACHEROUS ATTACK?*
SO IT DOTH SEEM, FAITH-FUL FRIEND.
MY FATHER DID FALL, 'TIS TRUE--
* LAST ISSUE--STAN.
--YET, HE FELL NOT IN THE REAL WORLD, IN THE WORLD OF DEATH AND ENDURANCE.
NO TRUE TIME HATH PASSED SINCE THAT TRAGIC MOMENT, FOR WE TRAVEL BETWEEN THE LAYERS OF TIME--
--AND FOR THIS REASON, I THINK ODIN MAY YET BE SAVED.
FOR I ASK THEE, OLD ONE-- WHERE BE GRIM HELA?
BUT SEEK ME, THOR--AND THOU SHALT FIND ME.
ACCEPT IT, FAIR ONE--
THE LONG FIGHT-- BE OVER.
NAY! NOT TILL THE FINAL BREATH BE DRAWN--
--AND DRAWN-- BY THE FINAL MAN!
BRAVE WORDS, THUNDER GOD!
SENTIMENTS FAIR FOR THE LIVING TO HOLD--
--YET MOST UN-SUITABLE FOR ONES AS DOOMED AS THEE!
'TIS SHE-- 'TIS HELA, GODDESS OF DEATH!
IN TRUTH, OUR MOMENTS ARE NUMBERED!
I SAY THEE NAY!
WE'VE STILL OUR COURAGE --AND OUR DARING!
WHAT GOOD DARING, THOR?
WITH ODIN DEAD, THERE BE NAUGHT 'TWEEN US-- AND OBLIVION!
MILORD, WE ARE UNDONE!
3.

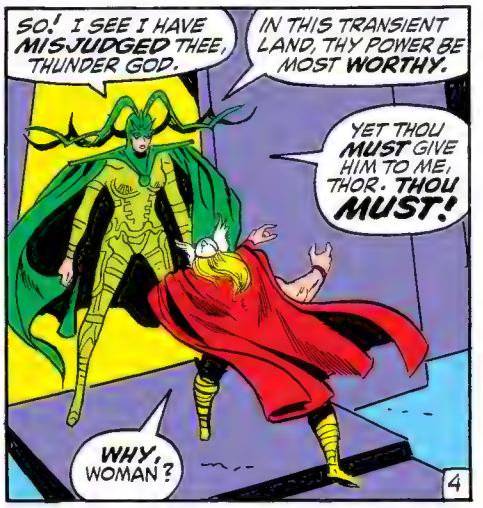
NOT JUST YET, OLD ONE.
HELA FIRST MUST CLAIM MY FATHER'S SACRED BODY--
--AND THAT SHE WILL NEVER DO!
AHH, THOU ART A BRASH ONE, THOR--

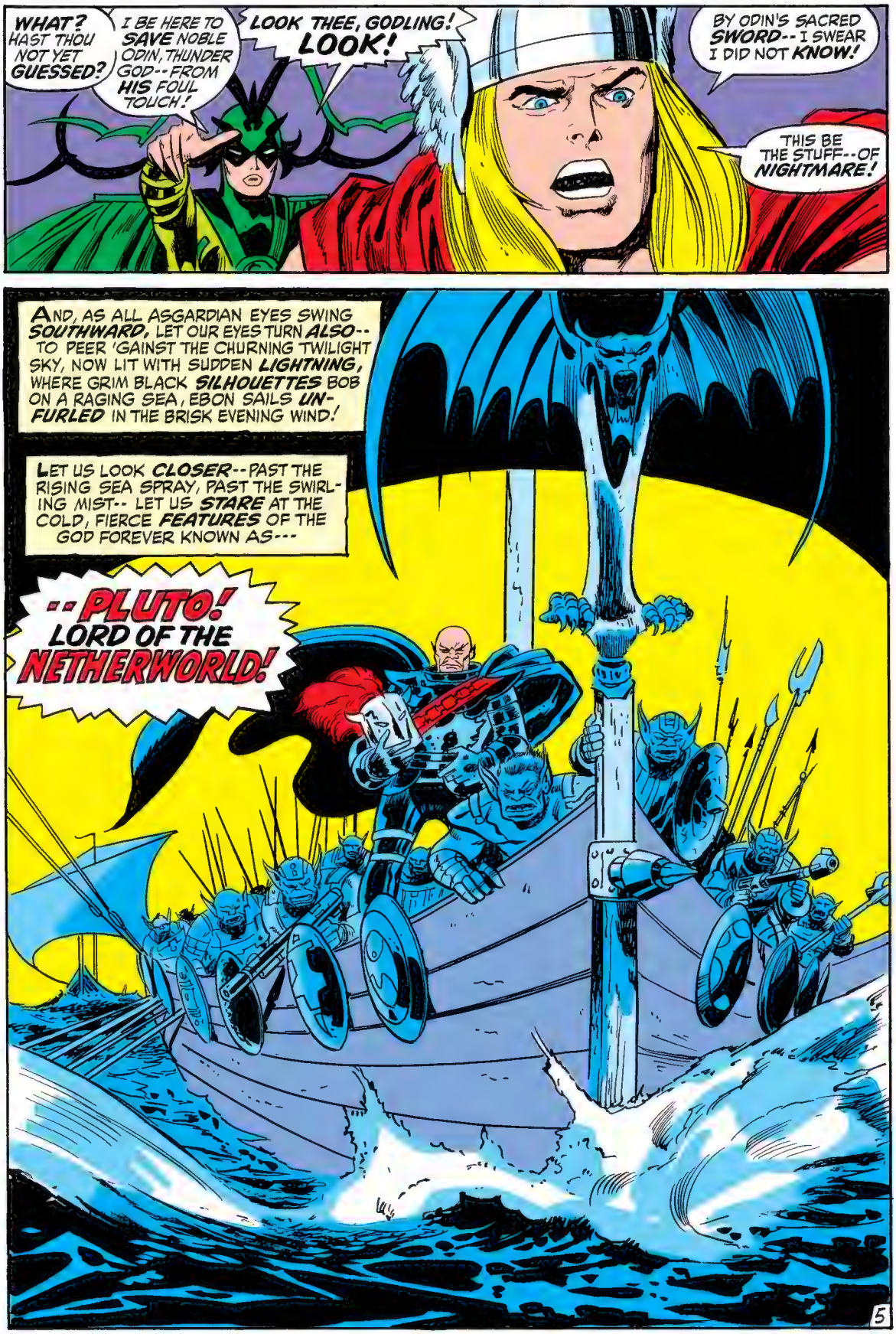
--- THOU SPEAKEST AS THY FATHER DID, IN HIS YOUTH.
THE WORLD WAS YOUNG THEN, THUNDER GOD. ODIN DID PROTEST THE NEED FOR DEATH---
--AND BUT LEARNED, THOU CANNOT PROTEST THAT WHICH ONLY IS!

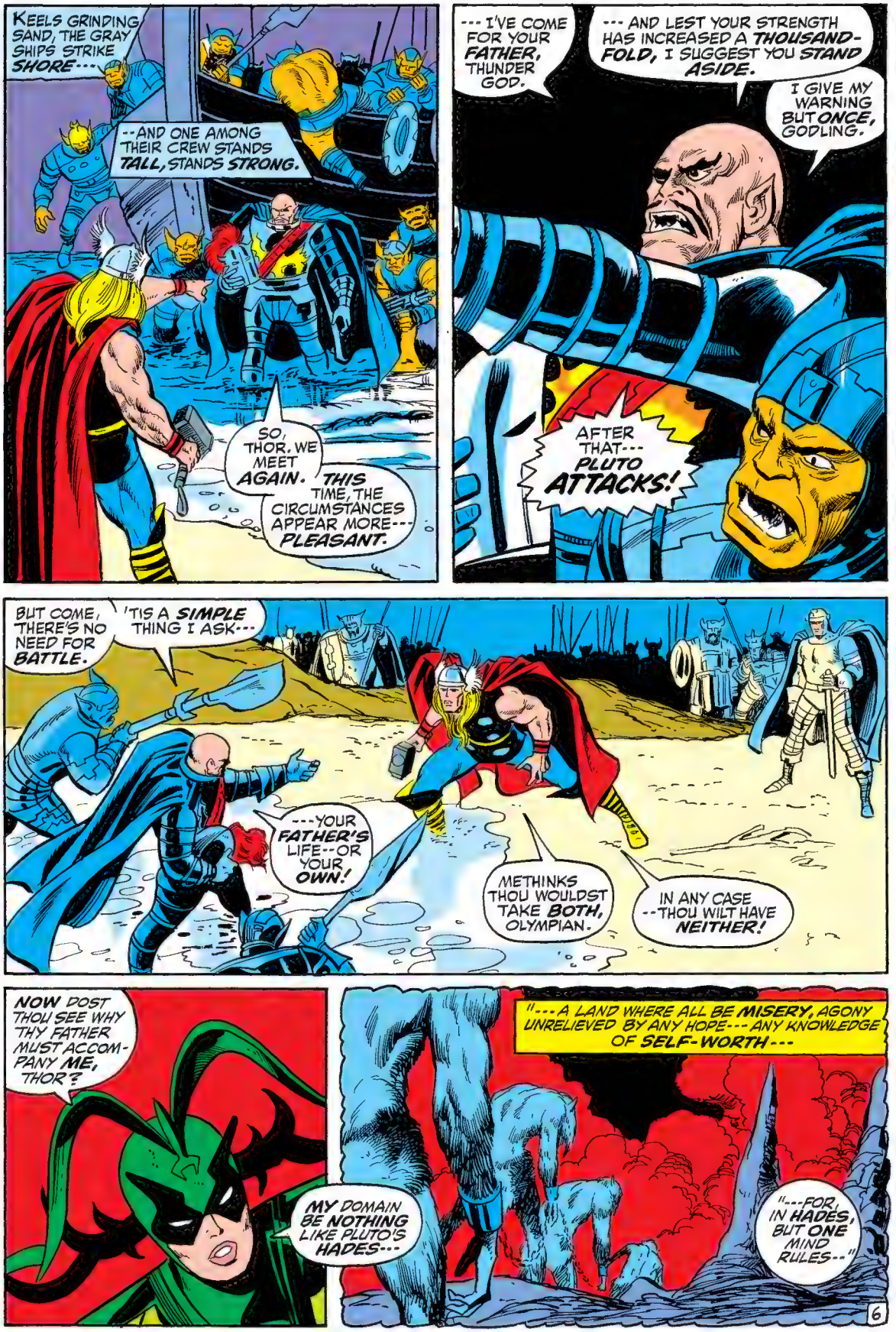

YET THE TIME FOR TALK BE PAST.
NOW MUST ODIN COME--- TO VALHALLA!

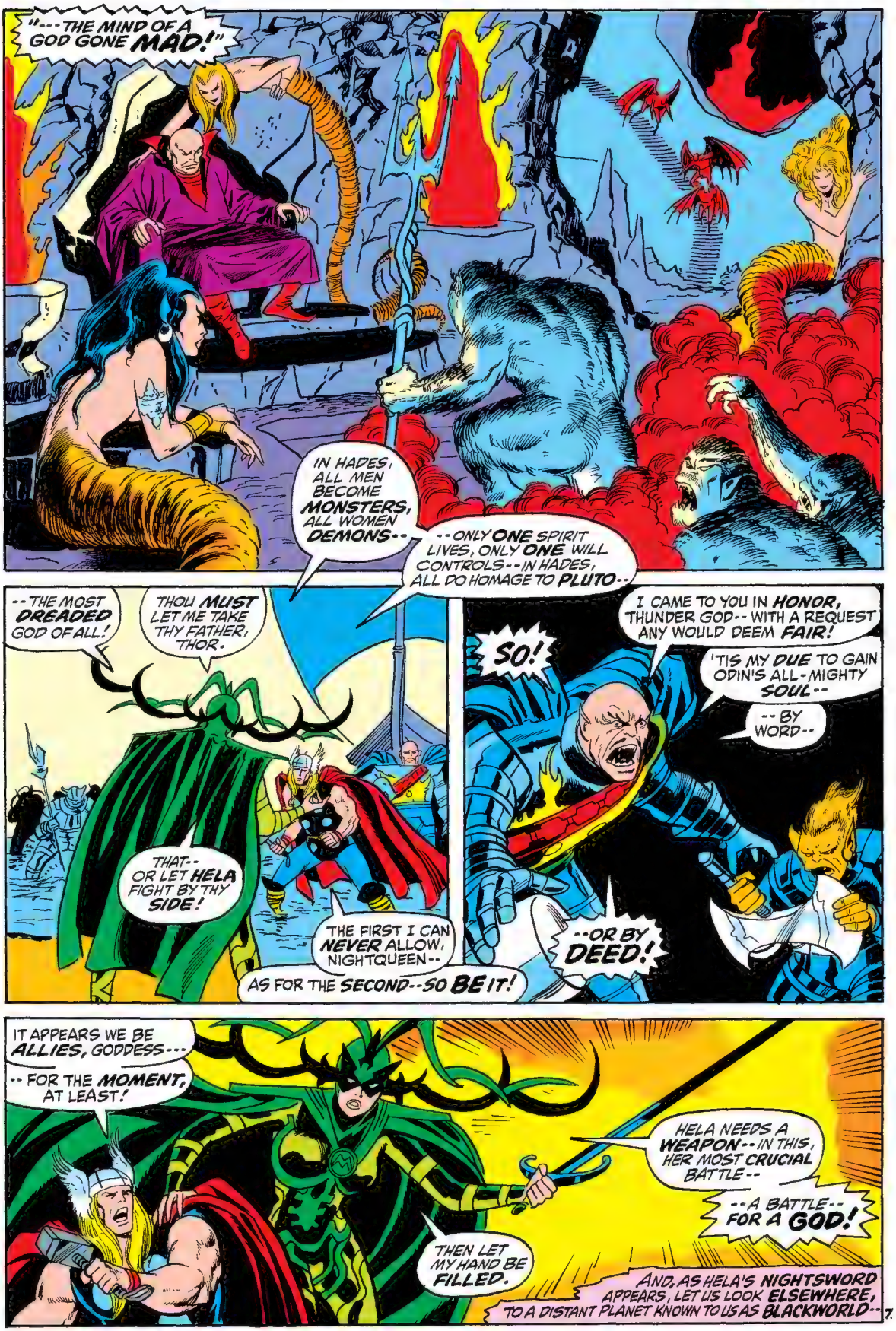

WHAT MADNESS--?
SOME FORM OF COSMIC BARRIER-- STRUCTURED SO E'EN MY POWERS CANNOT PIERCE IT!


THOR! BE THIS THY DOING, IMPUDENT GODLING?
IF THIS BE INSANITY, HELA --THEN YEA, THOR BE MOST INSANE!
ART THOU MAD?

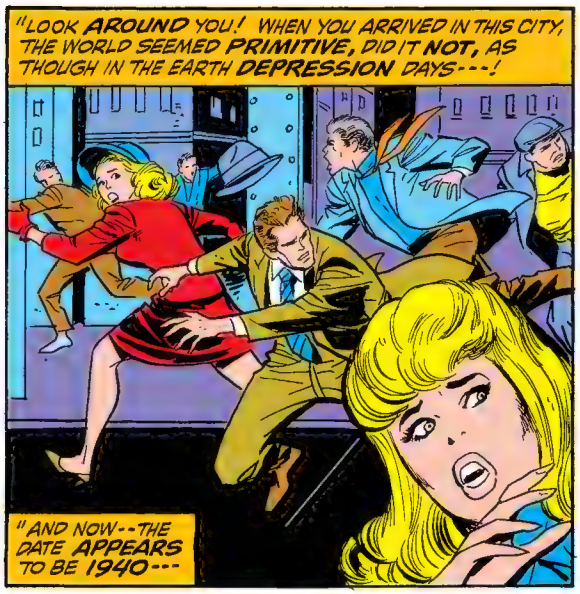

SO! I SEE I HAVE MISJUDGED THEE, THUNDER GOD.
IN THIS TRANSIENT LAND, THY POWER BE MOST WORTHY.
YET THOU MUST GIVE HIM TO ME, THOR. THOU MUST!
WHY, WOMAN?

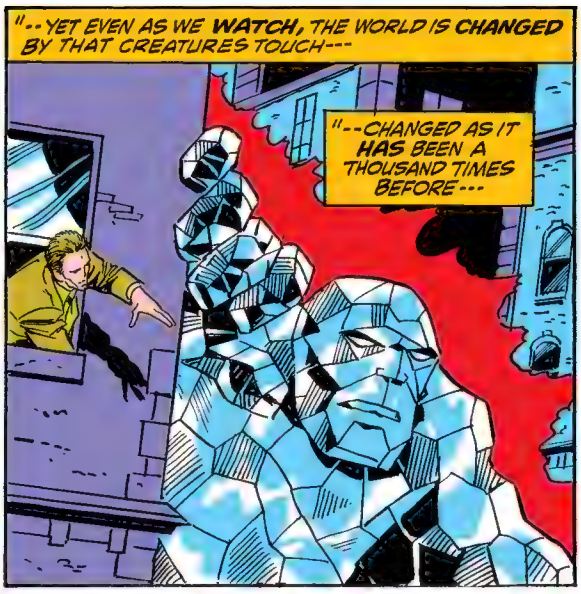

WHAT? HAST THOU NOT YET GUESSED?
I BE HERE TO SAVE NOBLE ODIN, THUNDER GOD--FROM HIS FOUL TOUCH!
LOOK THEE, GODLING! LOOK!
BY ODIN'S SACRED SWORD--I SWEAR I DID NOT KNOW!
THIS BE THE STUFF--OF NIGHTMARE!
AND, AS ALL ASGARDIAN EYES SWING SOUTHWARD, LET OUR EYES TURN ALSO--TO PEER 'GAINST THE CHURNING TWILIGHT SKY, NOW LIT WITH SUDDEN LIGHTNING, WHERE GRIM BLACK SILHOUETTES BOB ON A RAGING SEA, EBON SAILS UNFURLED IN THE BRISK EVENING WIND!
LET US LOOK CLOSER--PAST THE RISING SEA SPRAY, PAST THE SWIRLING MIST-- LET US STARE AT THE COLD, FIERCE FEATURES OF THE GOD FOREVER KNOWN AS---
--PLUTO! LORD OF THE NETHERWORLD!
5

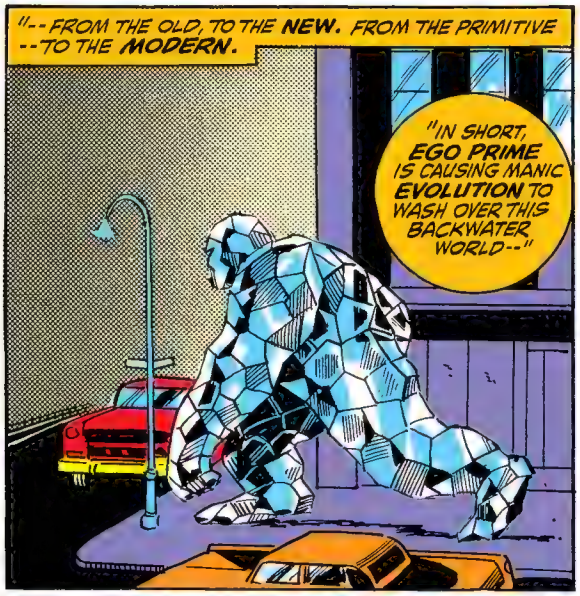

KEELS GRINDING SAND, THE GRAY SHIPS STRIKE SHORE---
--AND ONE AMONG THEIR CREW STANDS TALL, STANDS STRONG.
SO, THOR, WE MEET AGAIN.
THIS TIME, THE CIRCUMSTANCES APPEAR MORE--- PLEASANT.
--- I'VE COME FOR YOUR FATHER, THUNDER GOD.
--- AND LEST YOUR STRENGTH HAS INCREASED A THOUSAND-FOLD, I SUGGEST YOU STAND ASIDE.
I GIVE MY WARNING BUT ONCE, GODLING.
AFTER THAT--- PLUTO ATTACKS!
BUT COME, THERE'S NO NEED FOR BATTLE.
'TIS A SIMPLE THING I ASK---
---YOUR FATHER'S LIFE--OR YOUR OWN!
METHINKS THOU WOULDST TAKE BOTH, OLYMPIAN.
IN ANY CASE --THOU WILT HAVE NEITHER!
NOW DOST THOU SEE WHY THY FATHER MUST ACCOMPANY ME, THOR?
MY DOMAIN BE NOTHING LIKE PLUTO'S HADES---
"--- A LAND WHERE ALL BE MISERY, AGONY UNRELIEVED BY ANY HOPE--- ANY KNOWLEDGE OF SELF-WORTH ---
"---FOR, IN HADES, BUT ONE MIND RULES--"

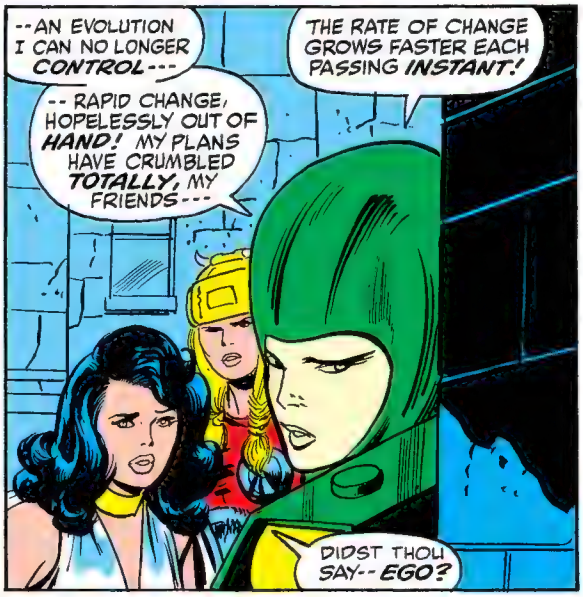

"---THE MIND OF A GOD GONE MAD!"
IN HADES, ALL MEN BECOME MONSTERS, ALL WOMEN DEMONS--
--ONLY ONE SPIRIT LIVES, ONLY ONE WILL CONTROLS--IN HADES, ALL DO HOMAGE TO PLUTO--
--THE MOST DREADED GOD OF ALL!
THOU MUST LET ME TAKE THY FATHER, THOR.
THAT-- OR LET HELA FIGHT BY THY SIDE!
THE FIRST I CAN NEVER ALLOW, NIGHTQUEEN--
AS FOR THE SECOND--SO BE IT!
I CAME TO YOU IN HONOR, THUNDER GOD-- WITH A REQUEST ANY WOULD DEEM FAIR!
SO!
'TIS MY DUE TO GAIN ODIN'S ALL-MIGHTY SOUL--
-- BY WORD--
--OR BY DEED!
IT APPEARS WE BE ALLIES, GODDESS---
-- FOR THE MOMENT, AT LEAST!
THEN LET MY HAND BE FILLED.
HELA NEEDS A WEAPON-- IN THIS, HER MOST CRUCIAL BATTLE--
--A BATTLE-- FOR A GOD!
AND, AS HELA'S NIGHTSWORD APPEARS, LET US LOOK ELSEWHERE, TO A DISTANT PLANET KNOWN TO US AS BLACKWORLD--

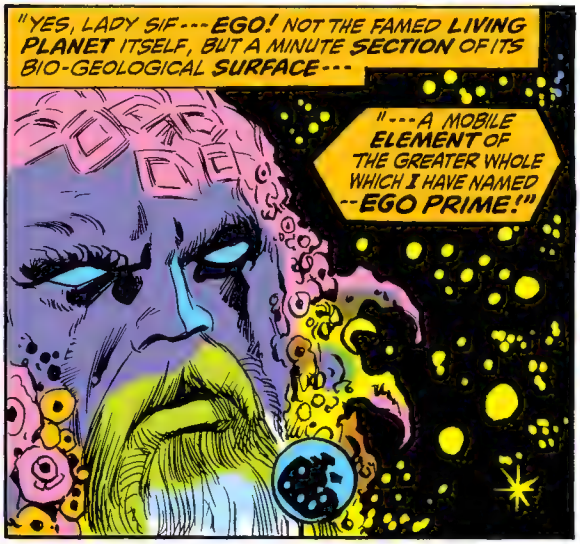
--WHERE THE GODDESS SIF AND HER NEW-FOUND COMPANIONS CONFRONT A DEMON EVEN PLUTO WOULD FIND MOST STRANGE!
STAY BEHIND THE FORCE-FIELD, ASGARDIAN.
ONLY THUS WILL YOU BE PROTECTED FROM "HIS" WORLD-CHANGING RADIATION--!
RIGELIAN, WE UNDER-STAND NOT--
--THIS MONSTER THOU DOST BATTLE-- THOU HINTS THAT IT BE THINE OWN CREATION!
HILDEGARDE, I HAVE NO TIME FOR QUESTIONS!
BE SILENT, OR LEAVE-- THE CHOICE IS YOURS!
"HE" COMES CLOSER-- EVER CLOSER!
"HE" IS HERE!
THE RAY IS USELESS. EVEN AS WE SPEAK, ITS POWER-PACK GROWS LOW!
OLD MAN-- YOU WHO CALL YOURSELF SILAS GRANT--
--LEAD US AWAY FROM HERE-- BEFORE HE FINDS US--
--AND DESTROYS US!
AYE, I'LL LEAD YE, LASS.
--THOUGH I'VE NO UNDER-STANDING OF WUT'S BEEN HAPPENIN' TO ME WORLD---
--THINGS CHANGIN' LIKE TO-MORROW WAS A-CROWDIN' YESTER-DAY!
HE DOTH SPEAK TRUE, TANA NILE.
YEA. BUT AN HOUR AGO, HILDEGARDE AND I DID BATTLE KNIGHTS--
--AND POOR SILAS PILOTED A PRIMITIVE STEAMBOAT. WHAT MEANS ALL THIS, COLONIZER?
IT MEANS I'VE FAILED, LADY SIF.
8

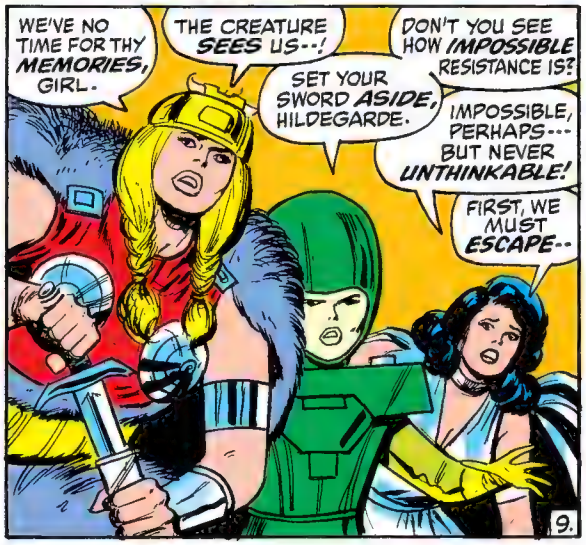

"LOOK AROUND YOU! WHEN YOU ARRIVED IN THIS CITY, THE WORLD SEEMED PRIMITIVE, DID IT NOT, AS THOUGH IN THE EARTH DEPRESSION DAYS---!
"AND NOW--THE DATE APPEARS TO BE 1940---

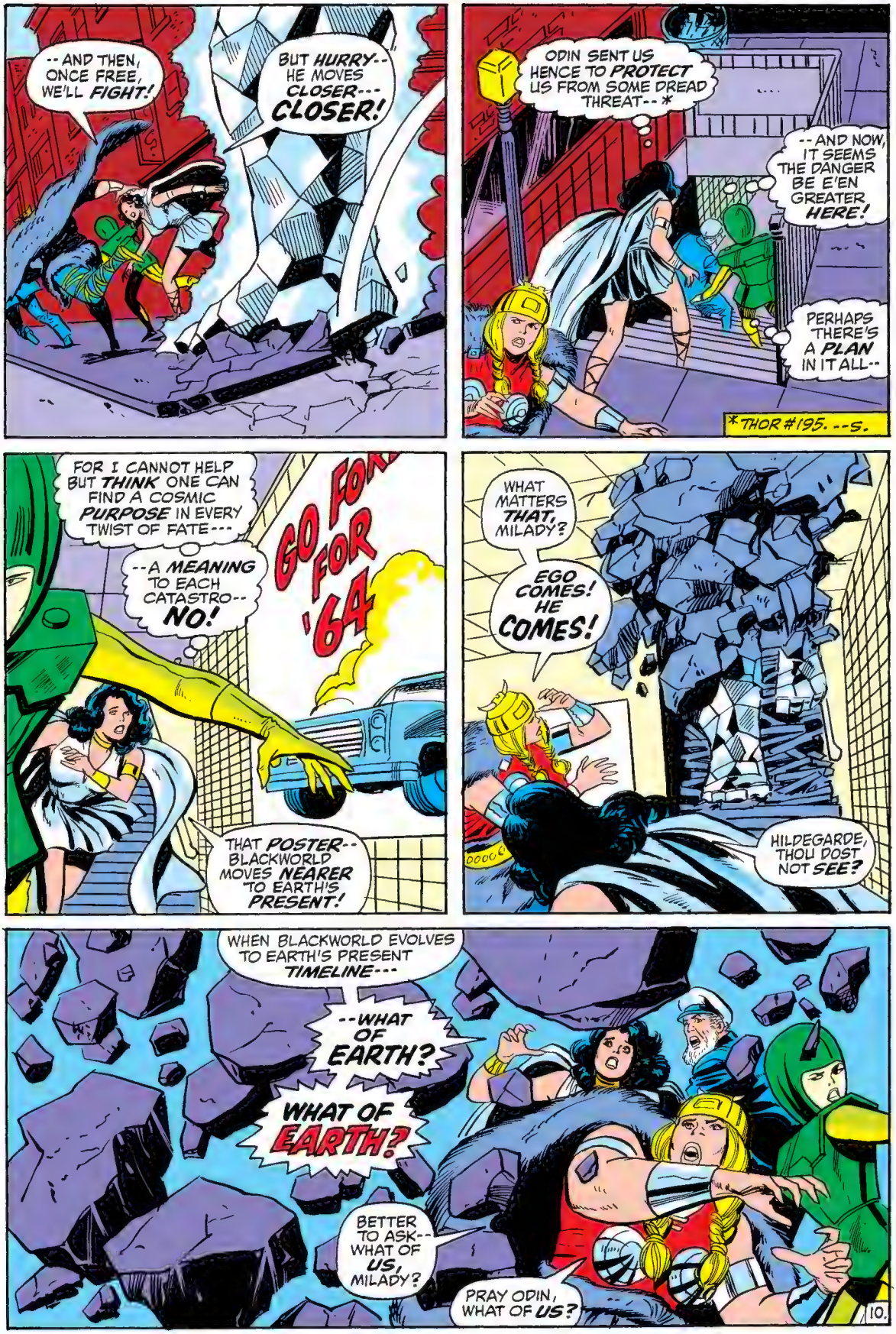

"--YET EVEN AS WE WATCH, THE WORLD IS CHANGED BY THAT CREATURES TOUCH---
"--CHANGED AS IT HAS BEEN A THOUSAND TIMES BEFORE---


"--FROM THE OLD, TO THE NEW. FROM THE PRIMITIVE --TO THE MODERN.
"IN SHORT, EGO PRIME IS CAUSING MANIC EVOLUTION TO WASH OVER THIS BACKWATER WORLD--"

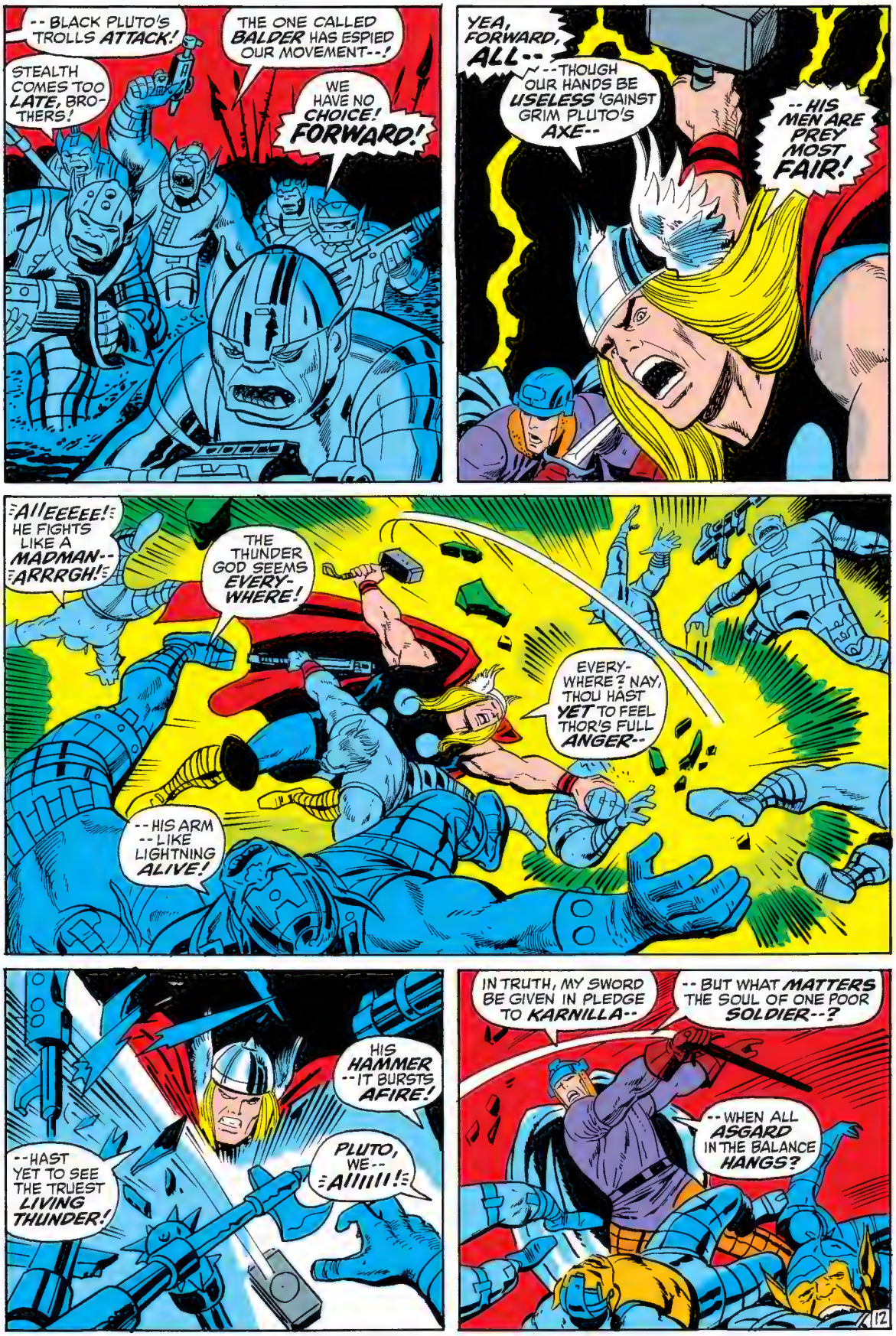

--AN EVOLUTION I CAN NO LONGER CONTROL---
THE RATE OF CHANGE GROWS FASTER EACH PASSING INSTANT!
-- RAPID CHANGE, HOPELESSLY OUT OF HAND! MY PLANS HAVE CRUMBLED TOTALLY, MY FRIENDS---
DIDST THOU SAY-- EGO?

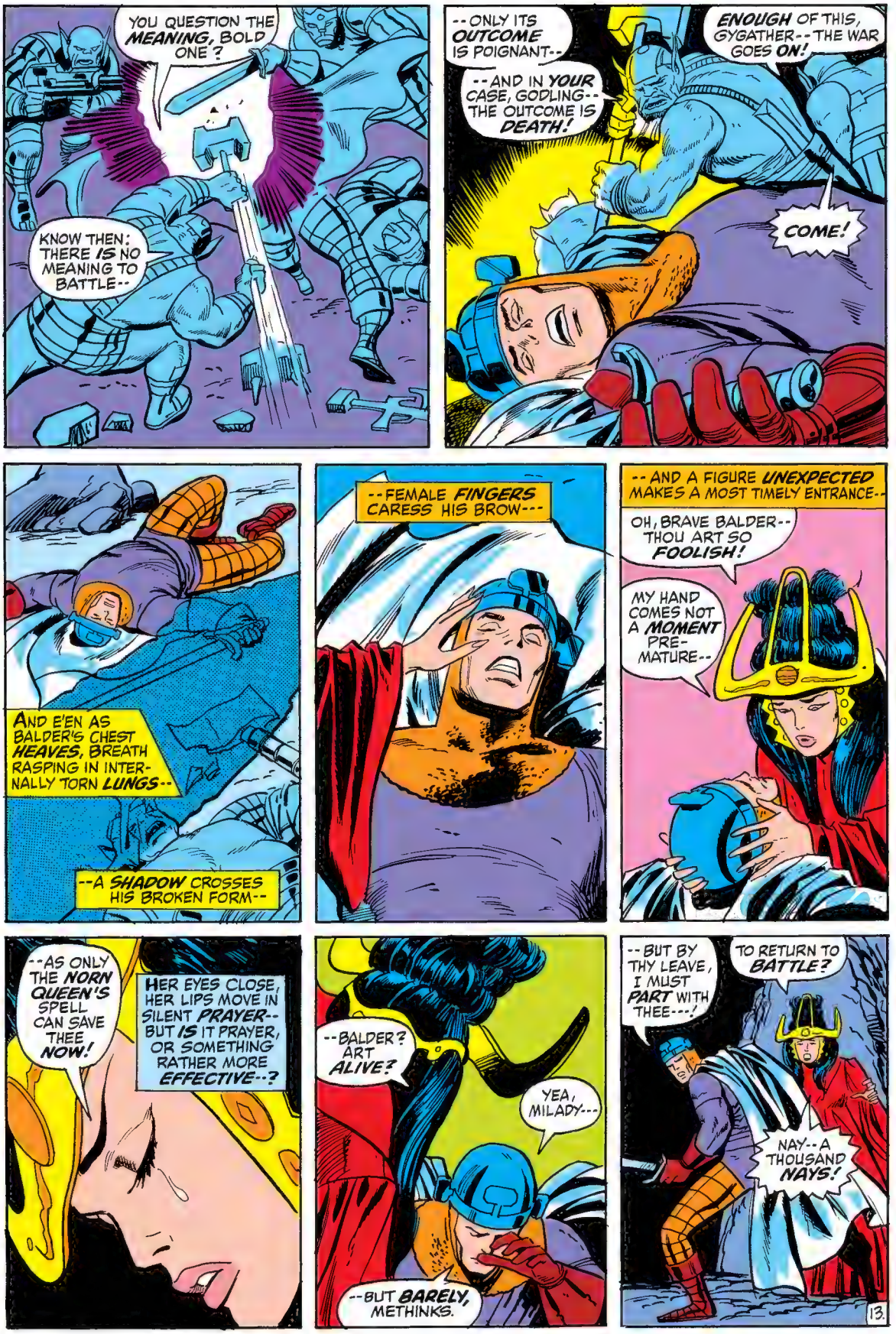

"YES, LADY SIF---EGO! NOT THE FAMED LIVING PLANET ITSELF, BUT A MINUTE SECTION OF ITS BIO-GEOLOGICAL SURFACE---
"---A MOBILE ELEMENT OF THE GREATER WHOLE WHICH I HAVE NAMED --EGO PRIME!"

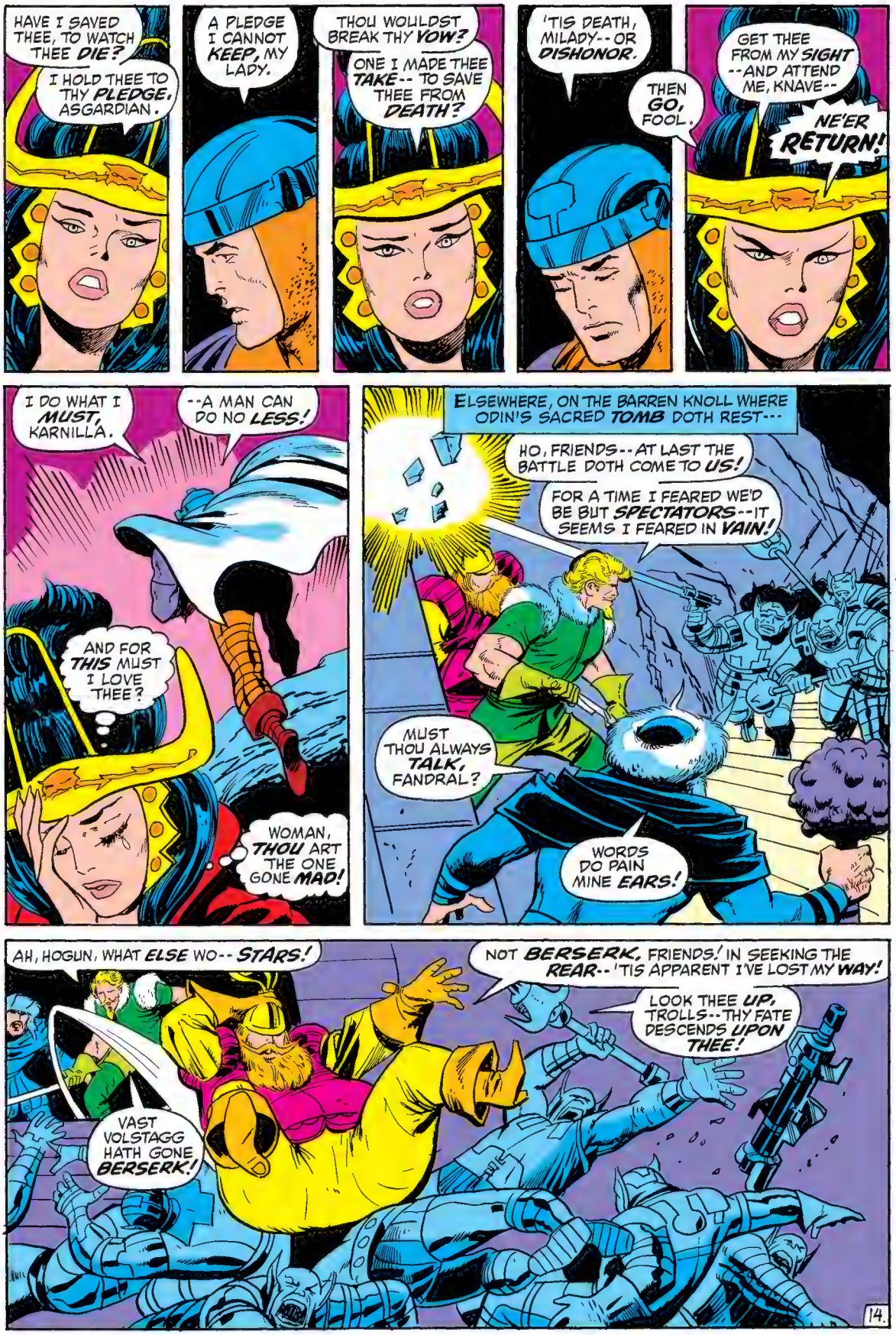

WE'VE NO TIME FOR THY MEMORIES, GIRL.
THE CREATURE SEES US--!
DON'T YOU SEE HOW IMPOSSIBLE RESISTANCE IS?
SET YOUR SWORD ASIDE, HILDEGARDE.
IMPOSSIBLE, PERHAPS--- BUT NEVER UNTHINKABLE!
FIRST, WE MUST ESCAPE--
9.

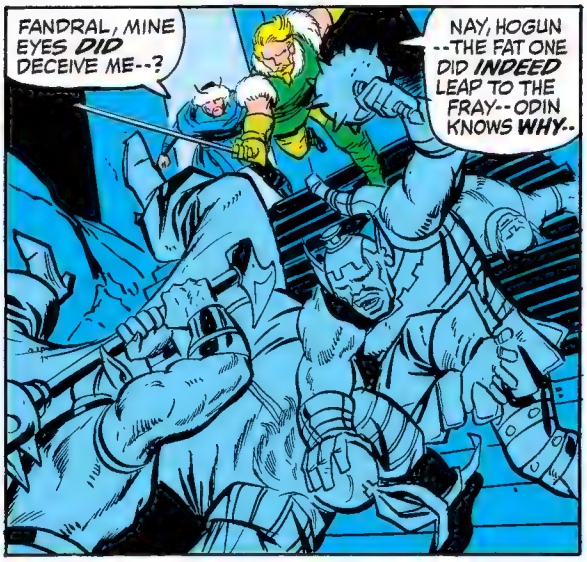

--AND THEN, ONCE FREE, WE'LL FIGHT!
BUT HURRY-- HE MOVES CLOSER--- CLOSER!
ODIN SENT US HENCE TO PROTECT US FROM SOME DREAD THREAT--*
--AND NOW, IT SEEMS THE DANGER BE E'EN GREATER HERE!
PERHAPS THERE'S A PLAN IN IT ALL--
*THOR #195. --S.
FOR I CANNOT HELP BUT THINK ONE CAN FIND A COSMIC PURPOSE IN EVERY TWIST OF FATE---
--A MEANING TO EACH CATASTRO-- NO!
GO FOR '64
THAT POSTER-- BLACKWORLD MOVES NEARER TO EARTH'S PRESENT!
WHAT MATTERS THAT, MILADY?
EGO COMES! HE COMES!
HILDEGARDE, THOU DOST NOT SEE?
WHEN BLACKWORLD EVOLVES TO EARTH'S PRESENT TIMELINE---
--WHAT OF EARTH?
WHAT OF EARTH?
BETTER TO ASK-- WHAT OF US, MILADY?
PRAY ODIN, WHAT OF US?

BUT NOW, THAT SCARCELY MATTERS--
-- FOR, IN FAR-OFF ASGARD, THE BATTLE DOTH BEGIN!
NEVER HAVE I FELT THE NEED TO FIGHT A WOMAN, DARK HELA--
--YET I'LL NOT SHIRK THAT NEED, OR YOUR BESORCERED NIGHTSWORD, IF DOING SO SHALL BRING THE END I CRAVE!
METHINKS THOU DOTH SPEAK TOO SOON, MILORD.
SURELY THOU DOTH FORGET-- WHERE THOU ART LORD--
--I BE LADY!
AND PERHAPS OUR POWERS ARE TOO EVENLY MATCHED?
I THINK NOT, GIRL---
--AS ALL THE WORLD-- WILL SOON DISCOVER!
LORD THOR-- THOU MUST PREPARE THY LEGIONS--!
E'EN AS WE WATCH THE NIGHT-GODS WAR--


-- BLACK PLUTO'S TROLLS ATTACK!
STEALTH COMES TOO LATE, BROTHERS!
THE ONE CALLED BALDER HAS ESPIED OUR MOVEMENT--!
WE HAVE NO CHOICE! FORWARD!
YEA, FORWARD, ALL--
--THOUGH OUR HANDS BE USELESS 'GAINST GRIM PLUTO'S AXE--
-- HIS MEN ARE PREY MOST FAIR!
AIIEEEEE! HE FIGHTS LIKE A MADMAN-- ARRRGH!
THE THUNDER GOD SEEMS EVERYWHERE!
EVERYWHERE? NAY, THOU HAST YET TO FEEL THOR'S FULL ANGER--
--HIS ARM --LIKE LIGHTNING ALIVE!
HIS HAMMER --IT BURSTS AFIRE!
--HAST YET TO SEE THE TRUEST LIVING THUNDER!
PLUTO, WE-- AIIIII!
IN TRUTH, MY SWORD BE GIVEN IN PLEDGE TO KARNILLA--
-- BUT WHAT MATTERS THE SOUL OF ONE POOR SOLDIER--?
-- WHEN ALL ASGARD IN THE BALANCE HANGS?

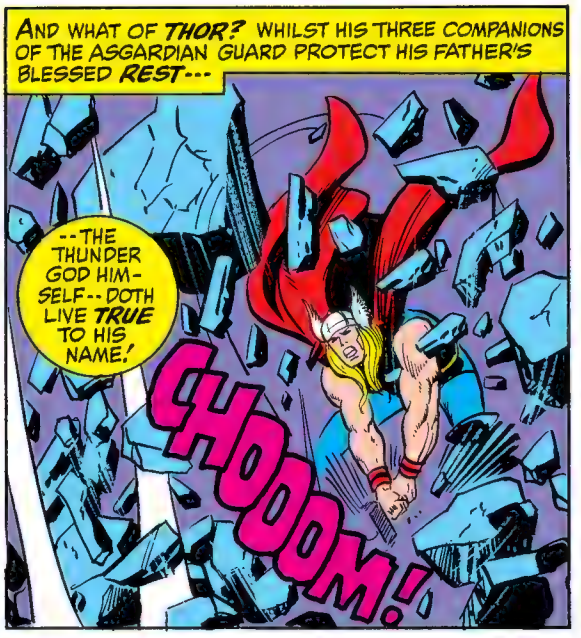

YOU QUESTION THE MEANING, BOLD ONE?
KNOW THEN: THERE IS NO MEANING TO BATTLE--
--ONLY ITS OUTCOME IS POIGNANT--
--AND IN YOUR CASE, GODLING-- THE OUTCOME IS DEATH!
ENOUGH OF THIS, GYGATHER--THE WAR GOES ON!
COME!
AND E'EN AS BALDER'S CHEST HEAVES, BREATH RASPING IN INTERNALLY TORN LUNGS--
--A SHADOW CROSSES HIS BROKEN FORM--
--FEMALE FINGERS CARESS HIS BROW---
--AND A FIGURE UNEXPECTED MAKES A MOST TIMELY ENTRANCE--
OH, BRAVE BALDER-- THOU ART SO FOOLISH!
MY HAND COMES NOT A MOMENT PRE-MATURE--
--AS ONLY THE NORN QUEEN'S SPELL CAN SAVE THEE NOW!
HER EYES CLOSE, HER LIPS MOVE IN SILENT PRAYER-- BUT IS IT PRAYER, OR SOMETHING RATHER MORE EFFECTIVE--?
--BALDER? ART ALIVE?
YEA, MILADY---
--BUT BARELY, METHINKS.
--BUT BY THY LEAVE, I MUST PART WITH THEE---!
TO RETURN TO BATTLE?
NAY--A THOUSAND NAYS!
13.


HAVE I SAVED THEE, TO WATCH THEE DIE?
I HOLD THEE TO THY PLEDGE, ASGARDIAN.
A PLEDGE I CANNOT KEEP, MY LADY.
THOU WOULDST BREAK THY VOW?
ONE I MADE THEE TAKE-- TO SAVE THEE FROM DEATH?
'TIS DEATH, MILADY-- OR DISHONOR.
THEN GO, FOOL.
GET THEE FROM MY SIGHT --AND ATTEND ME, KNAVE--
NE'ER RETURN!
I DO WHAT I MUST, KARNILLA.
--A MAN CAN DO NO LESS!
AND FOR THIS MUST I LOVE THEE?
WOMAN, THOU ART THE ONE GONE MAD!
ELSEWHERE, ON THE BARREN KNOLL WHERE ODIN'S SACRED TOMB DOTH REST---
HO, FRIENDS--AT LAST THE BATTLE DOTH COME TO US!
FOR A TIME I FEARED WE'D BE BUT SPECTATORS--IT SEEMS I FEARED IN VAIN!
MUST THOU ALWAYS TALK, FANDRAL?
WORDS DO PAIN MINE EARS!
AH, HOGUN, WHAT ELSE WO-- STARS!
NOT BERSERK, FRIENDS! IN SEEKING THE REAR--'TIS APPARENT I'VE LOST MY WAY!
LOOK THEE UP, TROLLS--THY FATE DESCENDS UPON THEE!
VAST VOLSTAGG HATH GONE BERSERK!

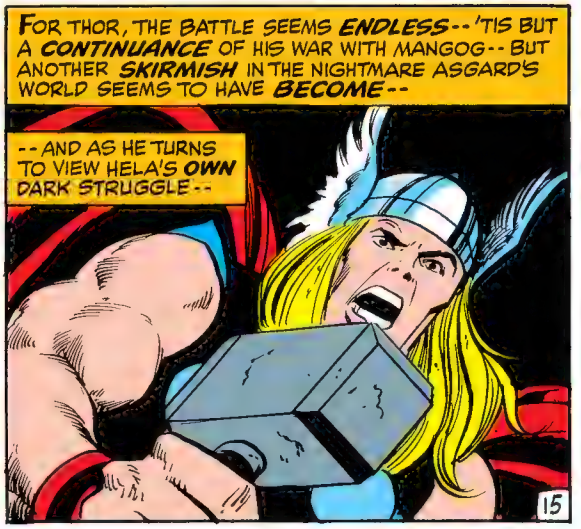

FANDRAL, MINE EYES DID DECEIVE ME--?
NAY, HOGUN --THE FAT ONE DID INDEED LEAP TO THE FRAY--ODIN KNOWS WHY--

--THOUGH VOLUMINOUS VOLSTAGG HAS BEEN ACTING STRANGELY SINCE DELIVERING THE WATERS OF THE TWILIGHT WELL TO OUR WISE VIZIER!*
MAYHAP HE'S FOUND HIMSELF, HOGUN---
--AND IN THAT UNLIKELY CASE---
*SHOWN LAST ISSUE. --STAN.

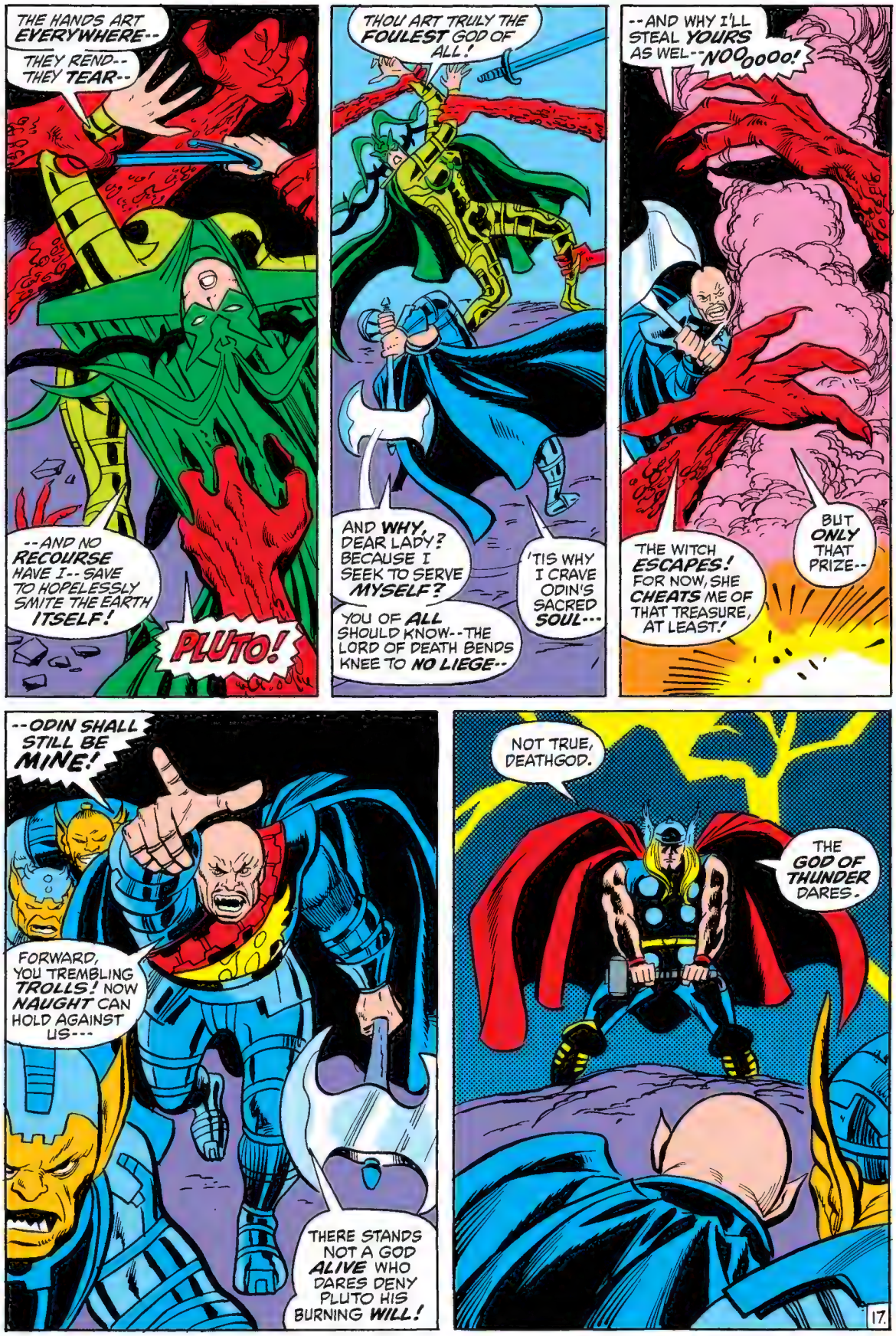
--HE SHALL NEED OUR HELP--ALL OF IT!


AND WHAT OF THOR? WHILST HIS THREE COMPANIONS OF THE ASGARDIAN GUARD PROTECT HIS FATHER'S BLESSED REST---
--THE THUNDER GOD HIMSELF--DOTH LIVE TRUE TO HIS NAME!
CHOOOOM!!

KRAAAK!


FOR THOR, THE BATTLE SEEMS ENDLESS--'TIS BUT A CONTINUANCE OF HIS WAR WITH MANGOG--BUT ANOTHER SKIRMISH IN THE NIGHTMARE ASGARD'S WORLD SEEMS TO HAVE BECOME--
--AND AS HE TURNS TO VIEW HELA'S OWN DARK STRUGGLE--

-- HIS THOUGHTS ARE COUNTLESS DREAMS AWAY--!
'TIS MADD'NING TRUE! FOR EVERY BLOW I STRIKE-- YOU STRIKE IN TURN!
DOTH IT CHANGE THY MIND, PLUTO?
HAST NOT YET SEEN-- THY FIGHT BE FUTILE?
NOT SO, WITCH!
WHERE PLUTO ALONE PROVES TOO BALANCED A FOE--
-- PERHAPS PLUTO WITH AID---
--CAN YET TIP THE SCALES!
THINE AXE-- POWER ARCS FROM ITS SILVERED BLADE--!
NAY! NOT E'EN THOU WOULDST E'ER DARE--!
CRAVEN KNAVE! WHAT WORTH THY HOPES FOR GLORY-- WHEN BY ACTION THOU DOTH SOIL THY NAME?
AND SUCH ACTION! TO CALL UP THESE--
SKKRRAAAK!
--THE DEMON HOUNDS OF HADES!
16.


THE HANDS ART EVERYWHERE--
THEY REND--
THEY TEAR--
--AND NO RECOURSE HAVE I-- SAVE TO HOPELESSLY SMITE THE EARTH ITSELF!
PLUTO!
THOU ART TRULY THE FOULEST GOD OF ALL!
AND WHY, DEAR LADY? BECAUSE I SEEK TO SERVE MYSELF?
YOU OF ALL SHOULD KNOW--THE LORD OF DEATH BENDS KNEE TO NO LIEGE--
'TIS WHY I CRAVE ODIN'S SACRED SOUL---
--AND WHY I'LL STEAL YOURS AS WEL--NOOoooo!
THE WITCH ESCAPES! FOR NOW, SHE CHEATS ME OF THAT TREASURE, AT LEAST!
BUT ONLY THAT PRIZE--
--ODIN SHALL STILL BE MINE!
FORWARD, YOU TREMBLING TROLLS! NOW NAUGHT CAN HOLD AGAINST US---
THERE STANDS NOT A GOD ALIVE WHO DARES DENY PLUTO HIS BURNING WILL!
NOT TRUE, DEATHGOD.
THE GOD OF THUNDER DARES.

YOU!
BATTLE HAS STRAINED YOUR MIND, GODLING--IF THE GODDESS OF DEATH HERSELF WAS UNABLE TO DEFEAT ME--
--WHAT FEEBLE HOPE HAVE YOU?
I HAVE MY HAMMER--AND MORE, I HAVE HONOR--
--AND BOTH DO SAY--
--THOU SHALT NOT WIN!
FOR ODIN! FOR ASGAAAARD!
WITH ONE BLOW YOU HAVE DECIMATED MY TROOPS--!
AYE, YOU ARE STRONGER THAN FIRST YOU APPEAR, BLONDHAIR!
AND THAT MYSTIC HAMMER OF YOURS--IT DOES HAVE ITS MORE WORTHY PROPERTIES, I SEE!
--BUT IT ALL MEANS NOTHING --NOTHING 'GAINST PLUTO!
THEN GET THEE UP, BRAGGART---
LET US TEST THE METTLE OF THY WORDS!
18

NOT MY WORDS, THOR-- MY ACTIONS!
THERE ARE POWERS IN THIS ARMORED FORM OF WHICH YOU CANNOT DREAM!
I WANT YOUR FATHER, THUNDER GOD --AND I MEAN TO TAKE HIM --BY ANY MEANS!
SO! INSTEAD OF HONEST BATTLE, THOU DOTH TURN TO TRICKERY!
INDEED THOU ART A MOST CAUTIOUS FOE---
--WARY AS THE SLINKING WORM!
THINK THEE I FEAR THY FIERY FORM? NAY, 'TIS NOTHING--
--WITH BUT THE TURN OF MY MYSTIC MALLET, I CREATE A MIGHTY SUCTION---
--THE FIRE FALTERS --AND IN A MOMENT--
--'TIS DONE!
THE FLAME WAS BUT A GAMBIT, THUNDER GOD-- TO DRAW YOU NEAR ME--
--SO I MIGHT PULL YOUR TEETH---
--AND PREPARE YOU-- FOR DEATH!
ART SO NAIVE CONCERNING THE GODS THOU FIGHT?
NOT IN OUR WEAPONS DOES OUR GIVEN POWER LIE--
--BUT IN OUR EVERY FIGHTING BREATH--
--AND ONLY WHEN THOSE END--
--WILL OUR GLORY PASS AWAY!
19

ONCE MORE A MISCONCEPTION IS MADE--
--AN ERROR, I FEAR-- BUT NOT ON MY PART---
--NO--THE ERROR IS YOURS!
YOU DARE THINK I'D BE SUCH A MADDENED FOOL?
ALL--ALL WAS WELL-WROUGHT STRATEGY, THUNDER GOD--FIRST TO DISARM YOU-- THEN TO BRING YOU CLOSER--
--AND NOW TO DRAIN YOU OF YOUR STRENGTH--
--OF YOUR EVER-LAUDED GLORY!
AT LAST, IT IS OVER.
THE SON LIES AS STILL AS HIS FATHER-- AND SO IT SHOULD BE.
WITH BOTH AS MY SLAVES, MY POWER WILL BE TREBLED--
--AND NO LONGER WILL PLUTO BE THE FOULEST OF GODS--
NO, ON THIS DAY--

PLUTO IS LORD OVER ALL!
NEXT ISSUE: NOW COMES THE NIGHTMARE!

THOR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP™
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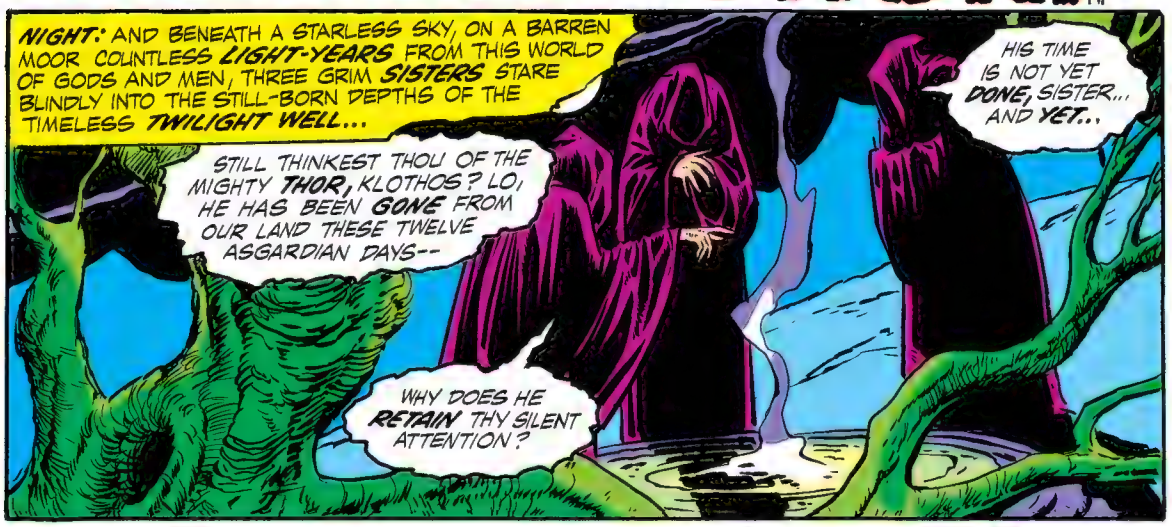
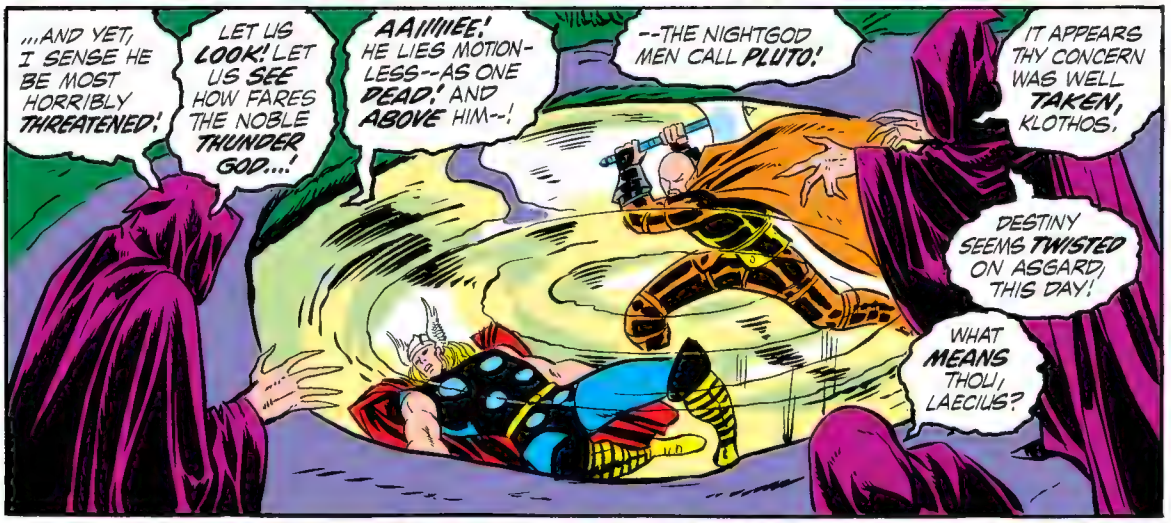
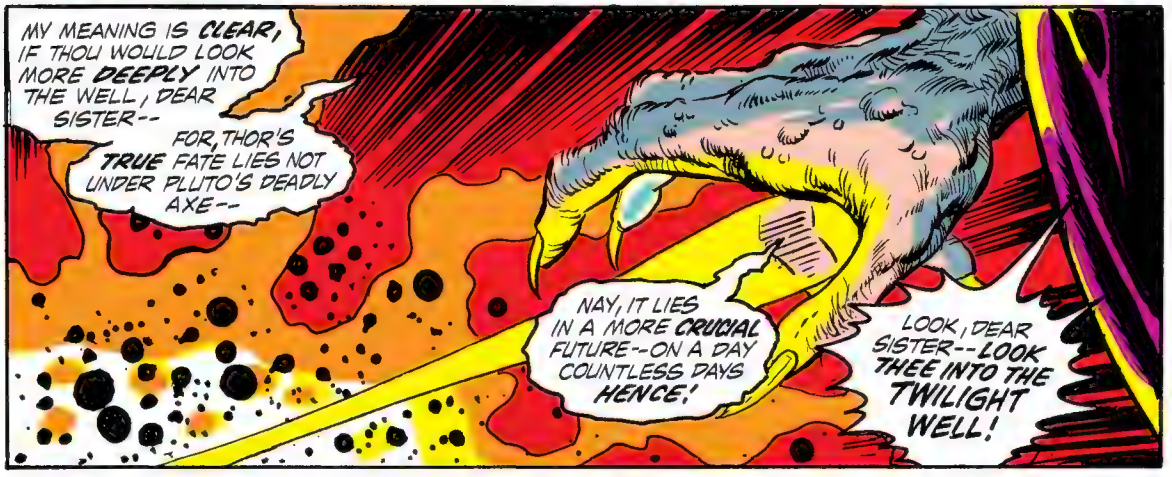
THE MIGHTY
THOR
™
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SPECIAL 200th ISSUE!
THE END OF THE WORLD!

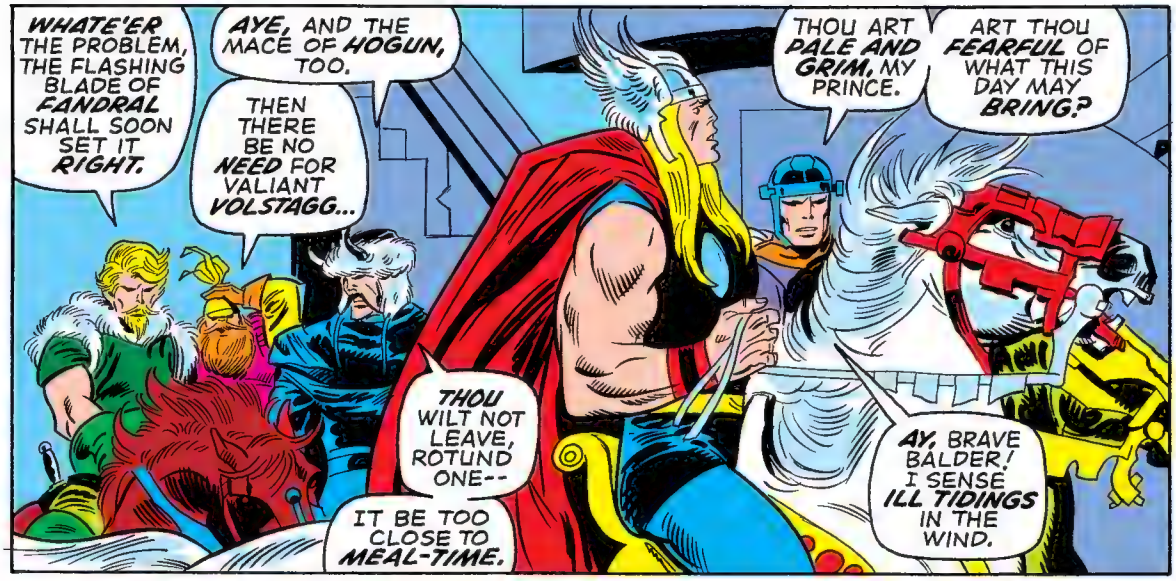
THE MIGHTY THOR!™


NIGHT: AND BENEATH A STARLESS SKY, ON A BARREN MOOR COUNTLESS LIGHT-YEARS FROM THIS WORLD OF GODS AND MEN, THREE GRIM SISTERS STARE BLINDLY INTO THE STILL-BORN DEPTHS OF THE TIMELESS TWILIGHT WELL...
STILL THINKEST THOU OF THE MIGHTY THOR, KLOTHOS? LO, HE HAS BEEN GONE FROM OUR LAND THESE TWELVE ASGARDIAN DAYS--
HIS TIME IS NOT YET DONE, SISTER... AND YET...
WHY DOES HE RETAIN THY SILENT ATTENTION?


...AND YET, I SENSE HE BE MOST HORRIBLY THREATENED!
LET US LOOK! LET US SEE HOW FARES THE NOBLE THUNDER GOD...!
AAIIIIEE! HE LIES MOTIONLESS--AS ONE DEAD! AND ABOVE HIM--!
--THE NIGHTGOD MEN CALL PLUTO!
IT APPEARS THY CONCERN WAS WELL TAKEN, KLOTHOS.
DESTINY SEEMS TWISTED ON ASGARD, THIS DAY!
WHAT MEANS THOU, LAECIUS?

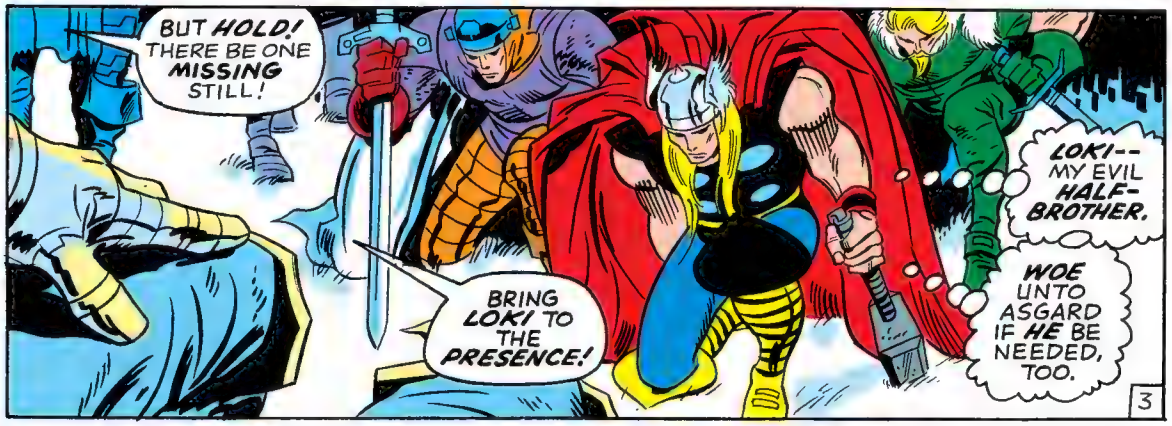

MY MEANING IS CLEAR, IF THOU WOULD LOOK MORE DEEPLY INTO THE WELL, DEAR SISTER--
FOR, THOR'S TRUE FATE LIES NOT UNDER PLUTO'S DEADLY AXE--
NAY, IT LIES IN A MORE CRUCIAL FUTURE--ON A DAY COUNTLESS DAYS HENCE!
LOOK, DEAR SISTER--LOOK THEE INTO THE TWILIGHT WELL!

BEWARE! IF THIS BE....
RAGNAROK!
WHY HATH LORD ODIN, MY REGAL FATHER, SUMMONED US?
LOYAL HEIMDALL, GUARDIAN OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE--
I KNOW NOT THE ANSWER, THUNDER GOD--BUT PASS YE ALL, IN SAFETY.
STORY & ART BY STAN (THE MAN) LEE and BIG JOHN BUSCEMA
J. VERPOORTEN EMBELLISHING
ARTIE SIMEK LETTERING
RAGNAROK! THE MOST TERRIFYING WORD IN ALL THE COSMOS--AND THIS TALE SHALL TELL THEE WHY!
NOTE TO BIBLIOPHILE:
PROLOGUE & EPILOGUE BY
GERRY CONWAY · JOHN BUSCEMA
WRITER ARTIST
2


WHATE'ER THE PROBLEM, THE FLASHING BLADE OF FANDRAL SHALL SOON SET IT RIGHT.
AYE, AND THE MACE OF HOGUN, TOO.
THEN THERE BE NO NEED FOR VALIANT VOLSTAGG...
THOU WILT NOT LEAVE, ROTUND ONE--
IT BE TOO CLOSE TO MEAL-TIME.
THOU ART PALE AND GRIM, MY PRINCE.
ART THOU FEARFUL OF WHAT THIS DAY MAY BRING?
AY, BRAVE BALDER! I SENSE ILL TIDINGS IN THE WIND.

ODIN WOULD NOT SUMMON US, FROM THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF THE ETERNAL REALM--
--UNLESS THE REALM ITSELF BE THREATENED, BY DANGER MOST DEADLY!
ASGARDIANS, COME FORTH!

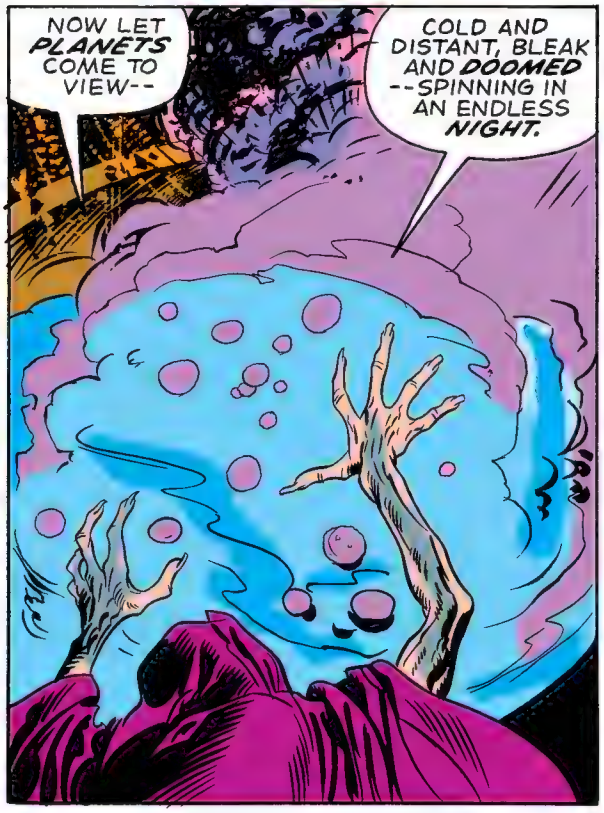
I HAVE AWAITED THEE OUT HERE--WITHIN THE ROYAL ARBOR.
FOR, WHAT NEEDS BE DONE, CAN BEST BE DONE-- BENEATH THE SHELTERING SKY.


BUT HOLD! THERE BE ONE MISSING STILL!
BRING LOKI TO THE PRESENCE!
LOKI-- MY EVIL HALF-BROTHER.
WOE UNTO ASGARD IF HE BE NEEDED, TOO.

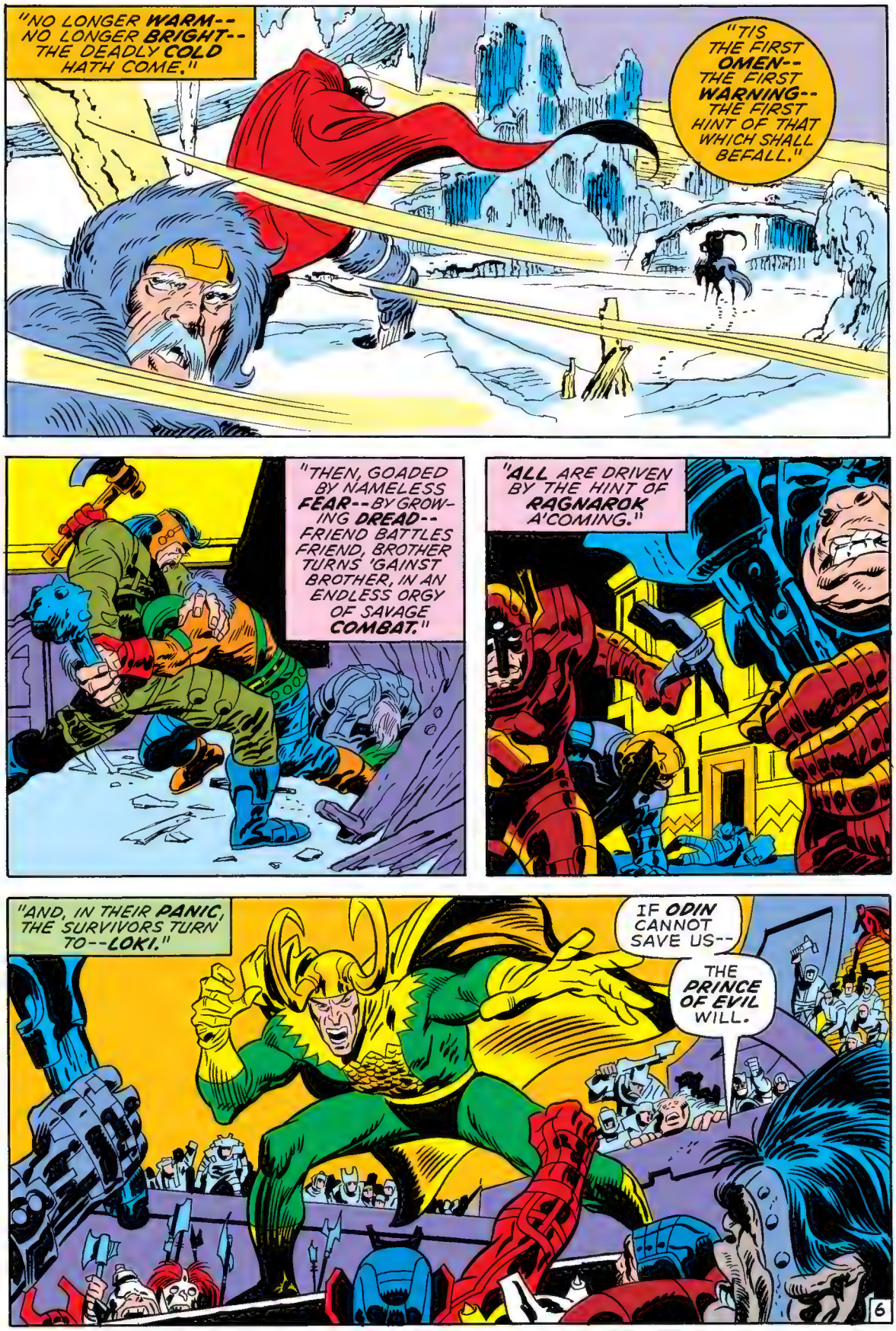
LET ALL STAND BACK! LOKI DOTH APPROACH.
THE SON OF ODIN NEEDS NO ESCORT.
WHERE WE DID BOW, MY BROTHER MERELY BENDS.
I STAND BEFORE THEE, SIRE--AND AWAIT THY PLEASURE.
NOW BE SILENT, ALL.
THE TIME HATH COME FOR VOLLA, THE PROPHETESS, TO REVEAL WHAT THE FUTURE HATH IN STORE.
AND, SHE SHALL TELL OF--
RAGNAROK!
RAGNAROK--WHEN ALL THE WORLD SHALL END!
THEN SHOW US, HAG--AND DO THY WORST.
THY VISIONS CANNOT FRIGHTEN LOKI.
BE THAT AS IT MAY, YOUNG PRINCE--
BUT, THERE BE THOSE WHO TREMBLE.
RAGNAROK! NO--NO!
4

LET ALL STAND FIRM--OR INCUR THE ROYAL WRATH!
ODIN HATH SPOKE! REVEAL THY VISIONS, VOLLA.

VAPORS OF TIME, NOW RISE ABOUT ME! LET THY MYSTICAL MISTS ENGULF US ALL.
I COMMAND THEE, BY THE POWER OF PROPHESY, WHICH ALL-MIGHTY ODIN DIDST BEQUEATH ME, MANY AGES PAST.
MAY THE FUTURE STAND REVEALED.


NOW LET PLANETS COME TO VIEW--
COLD AND DISTANT, BLEAK AND DOOMED --SPINNING IN AN ENDLESS NIGHT.

'TIS THE FUTURE I DO SHOW--
BUT, IT BE DIFFERENT-- IT BE CHANGED.
AND NOW, BEHOLD ETERNAL ASGARD...

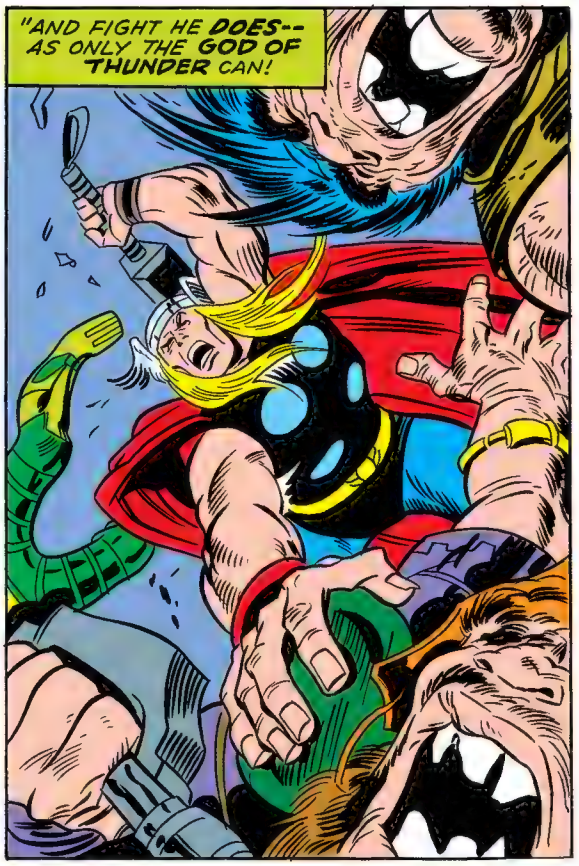

"NO LONGER WARM-- NO LONGER BRIGHT-- THE DEADLY COLD HATH COME."
"'TIS THE FIRST OMEN-- THE FIRST WARNING-- THE FIRST HINT OF THAT WHICH SHALL BEFALL."
"THEN, GOADED BY NAMELESS FEAR--BY GROWING DREAD-- FRIEND BATTLES FRIEND, BROTHER TURNS 'GAINST BROTHER, IN AN ENDLESS ORGY OF SAVAGE COMBAT."
"ALL ARE DRIVEN BY THE HINT OF RAGNAROK A'COMING."
"AND, IN THEIR PANIC, THE SURVIVORS TURN TO--LOKI."
IF ODIN CANNOT SAVE US--
THE PRINCE OF EVIL WILL.
6

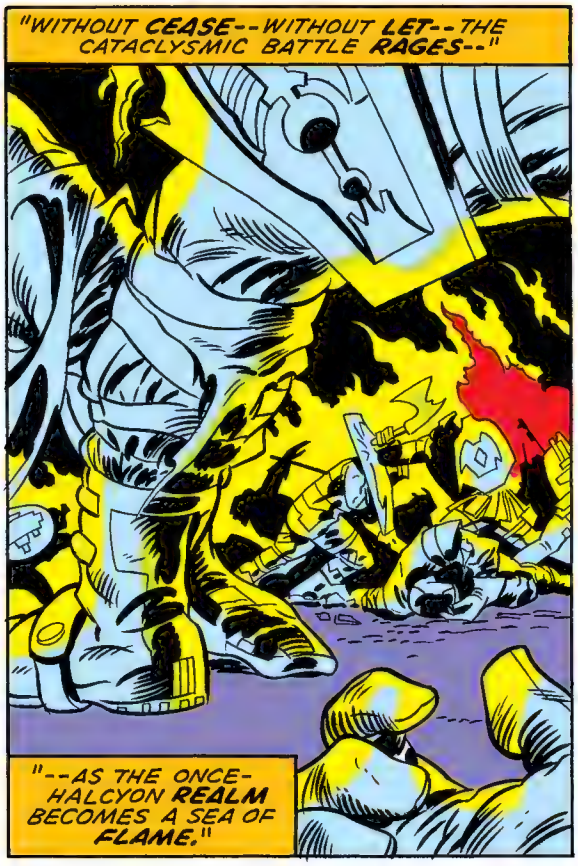
I'LL HEAR NO MORE! THE SEERESS LIES!
'TIS BUT A PLOT TO DEFAME THE INNOCENT LOKI!
NAY! NAY! THE MISTS CANNOT LIE.
ADMIT THOU ART A FRAUD-- OR DIE!
IF ANY FALL THIS FATEFUL NIGHT--
I SWEAR 'TWILL NOT BE VOLLA!
WE WILL LEARN THE PROPHESY, EVIL ONE--
NOT ALL THY THREATS SHALL STEM IT.
DESIST!
IN ODIN'S NAME, LIFT NOT THY HANDS, ONE AGAINST THE OTHER!
I BEG FORGIVENESS, FATHER.
GRANTED, THUNDER GOD! AND LOKI-- WHAT OF THEE?
THOU ART FATHER! I AM SON.
'TIS ENOW.
SO BE IT.

BUT FATHER AND BROTHER BOTH--MARK YE WELL MY WORDS--
THERE SHALL COME A RECKONING.
THAT DOTH LOKI VOW.
"ONCE AGAIN THE MISTS REVEAL-- LOKI WILL GATHER HIM AN ARMY--"
"AND, HE WILL LEAD A LAST ATTACK AGAINST THE REALM ITSELF--"
"BUT, WHEN THE LIVING SEA OF INVADING TROLLS, AND GIANTS, AND DEMONS WITHOUT END REACH THE FABLED BIFROST--"
"THERE WILL STAND HEIMDALL --DEFENDER OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE."
THEY SHALL NOT PASS!
8

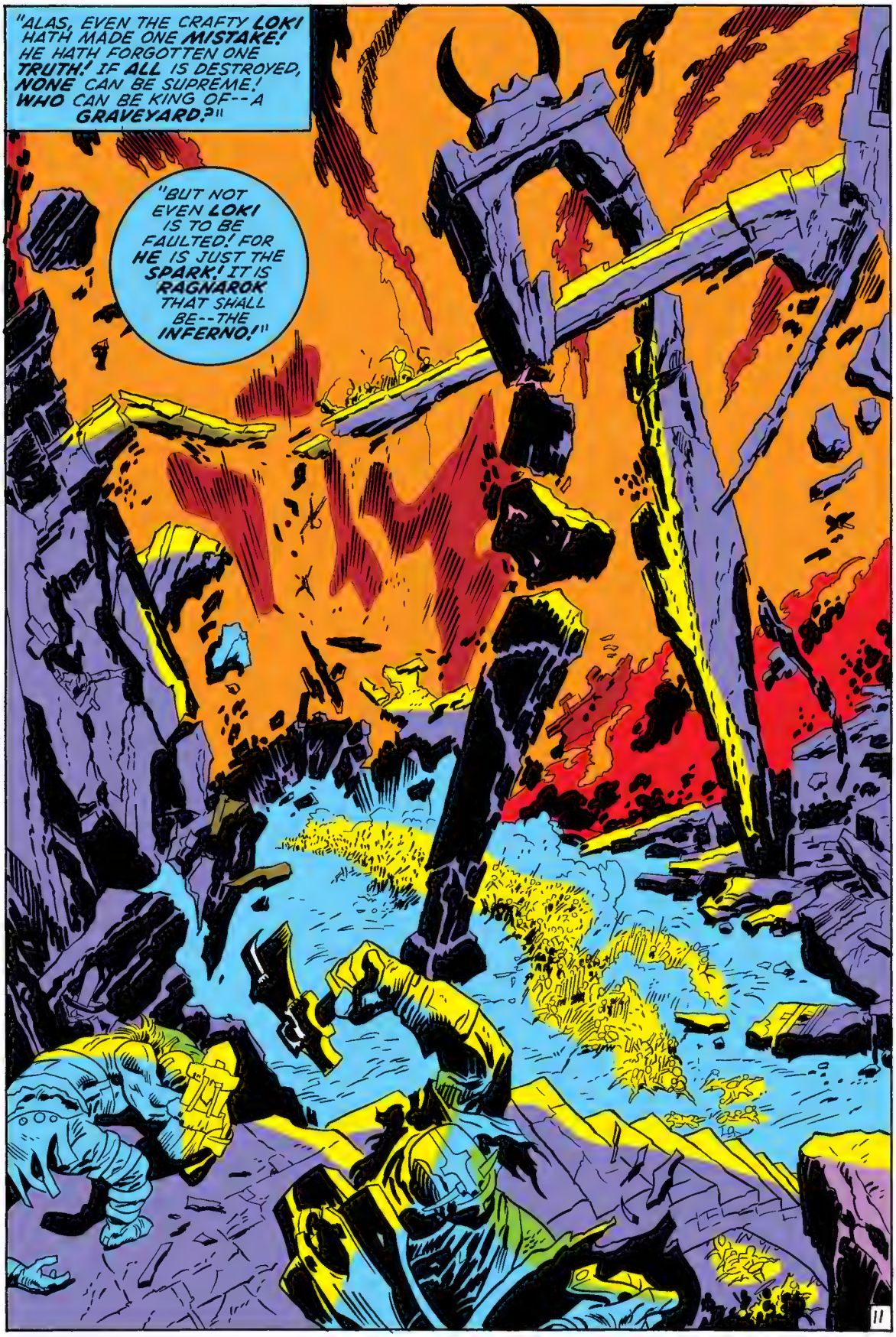
WITH MINE OWN BLADE-- I SEVER THE BRIDGE-- FORE'ER!
"THEN, AS BIFROST CRUMBLES, HEIMDALL SHALL SOUND THE LAST ALARM--"
"AND, AS RAGNAROK DRAWS CLOSER-- HE WILL FIGHT HIS FINAL FIGHT."
"BUT, WHAT OF OMNIPOTENT ODIN--?"
SIRE! BIFROST AND HEIMDALL ARE NO MORE!
THEN THE END IS TRULY COME.
'TIS THE HOUR THE PROPHECIES DIDST FORETELL! THE TIME OF RAGNAROK IS NIGH.
NOW LET US DIE AS WE HAVE LIVED--
FOR ASGAAAARD!
9

"BUT, TWO SONS HATH ODIN SIRED! THOUGH ONE HATH COMMITTED THE ULTIMATE TREASON--"
"THE OTHER PREPARES TO FIGHT TO THE DEATH FOR LIBERTY, LAND, AND LIEGE."


"AND FIGHT HE DOES-- AS ONLY THE GOD OF THUNDER CAN!


"WITHOUT CEASE--WITHOUT LET--THE CATACLYSMIC BATTLE RAGES--"
"--AS THE ONCE-HALCYON REALM BECOMES A SEA OF FLAME."

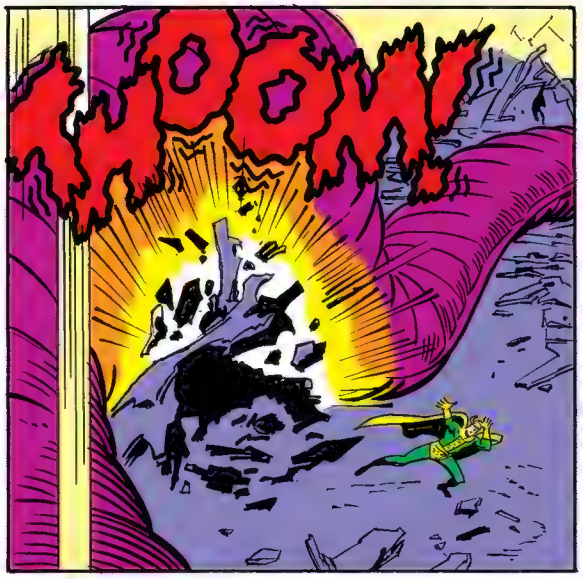
"BUT, AS MULTITUDES FALL, ONE MERCILESS HEART IS HAPPY--ONE SINISTER SOUL DOTH REJOICE--"
LET ASGARD TOPPLE! LET THEM WHO HAVE OPPOSED ME NOW BE SLAIN!
MY POWER LIVES-- WHILE THEIRS IS DESTROYED!
WHEN IT HATH ENDED, LOKI WILL BE THE MASTER! LOKI WILL BE --SUPREME!

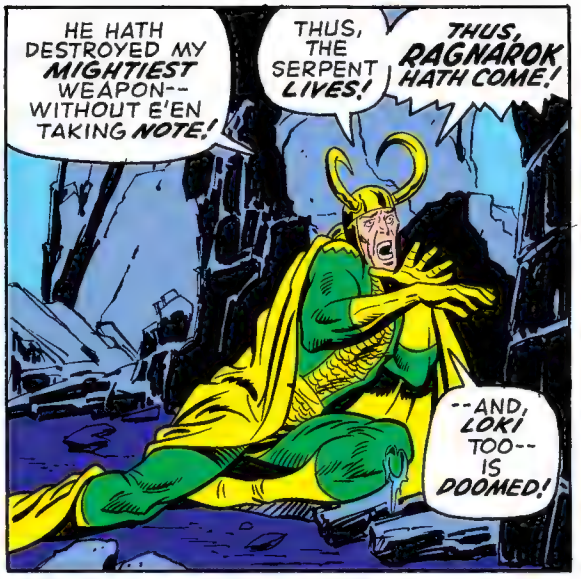

"ALAS, EVEN THE CRAFTY LOKI HATH MADE ONE MISTAKE! HE HATH FORGOTTEN ONE TRUTH! IF ALL IS DESTROYED, NONE CAN BE SUPREME! WHO CAN BE KING OF--A GRAVEYARD?"
"BUT NOT EVEN LOKI IS TO BE FAULTED! FOR HE IS JUST THE SPARK! IT IS RAGNAROK THAT SHALL BE--THE INFERNO!"

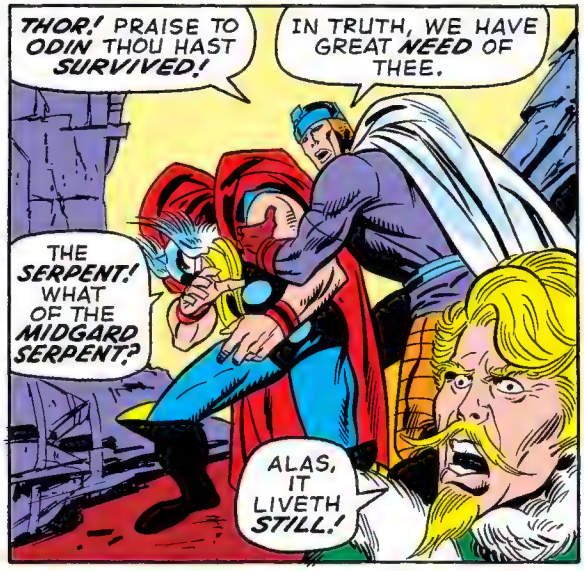
YEA, LOKI DOTH NOT YET BELIEVE! BUT HE SHALL--THE MISTS ALL SAY HE SHALL!"
WHAT.? THOR STILL LIVES.?
LOKI SHALL REMEDY SO GRIEVOUS AN ERROR.
BROTHER, ART THOU TRULY MAD?
WITH RAGNAROK UPON US--
THERE BE NO TIME FOR HATRED.
THE HATE I BEAR THEE CAN OUTLIVE TIME ITSELF.!
SPEAK NOT TO ME OF RAGNAROK--
'TIS A TALE TO FRIGHTEN FOOLS--OR COWARDS!
LET OTHERS LIVE IN FEAR--
WHILST LOKI STRIKES FOR PLUNDER.
THEN LET THY HATE SUSTAIN THEE NOW--
FOR NOTHING ELSE CANST SAVE THEE!
A DEAFENING ROAR ASSAILS MINE EARS! THE FETID BREATH OF DOOM NOW CHOKES ME!
THE MIDGARD SERPENT DOTH APPEAR!
THEN--THE LEGENDS DID NOT LIE!
"THUS, LOKI SHALL KNOW AT LAST! FOR, THE MIDGARD SERPENT IS THE FINAL FOE--THE ULTIMATE DESTROYER!"
12

MY BROTHER HATH FLED-- BUT THOR MUST EVER STAND HIS GROUND.
AND SO STAND WE, O PRINCE!
NOT SWORD NOR MACE CAN SAVE US NOW.
BUT, MAYHAP, ENCHANTED MJOLNIR--
IF THY HAMMER FAIL THEE, THUNDER GOD--
THEN WE SHALL STRIKE, WHILST LIFE ENDURES!
SZRAKK!
BACK TO THE SLIME FROM WHICH THOU DIDST COME!
HE LIVETH STILL!
NOT E'EN ENCHANTED MJOLNIR HAD POWER ENOW!
13

WHILST LASHING OUT IN PAIN, THE SERPENT'S TAIL DIDST FELL OUR PRINCE.
AND NOW LIES THOR THERE HELPLESS!
LOOK TO THY SWORD!
HE DOTH STRIKE AGAIN!
'TIS TO NO AVAIL.
OUR BLADES DO SHATTER 'GAINST HIS HIDE!
ENOUGH OF FLASHING SWORD AND STEEL!
THE TIME IS COME FOR HOGUN'S MACE!
NAY--STAND THEE BACK! BEHOLD WHAT DOTH OCCUR--
THE SERPENT TURNS--
--TO MEET ATTACK FROM YET ANOTHER SOURCE.
SO LET US QUICKLY BEAR THE THUNDER GOD TO SAFETY.
"IT WILL BE LOKI WHO FURNISHES THE DISTRACTION --WHILST SEEKING TO SAVE HIMSELF."
AGAIN, THOU WITLESS OAFS--FIRE AGAIN, AND AGAIN TILL THE SERPENT FALLS.
NONE MUST REMAIN ALIVE-- TO CHALLENGE THE RULE OF LOKI.
BUT-- IT TURNS-- IT SWAYS!
IN ITS MAD, BLIND RAGE-- IT COMES THIS WAY!
14

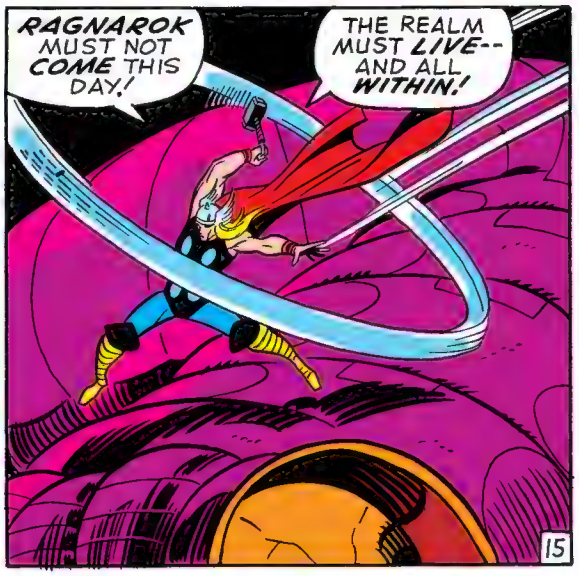

THOOM!


HE HATH DESTROYED MY MIGHTIEST WEAPON-- WITHOUT E'EN TAKING NOTE!
THUS, THE SERPENT LIVES!
THUS, RAGNAROK HATH COME!
--AND, LOKI TOO-- IS DOOMED!


THOR! PRAISE TO ODIN THOU HAST SURVIVED!
IN TRUTH, WE HAVE GREAT NEED OF THEE.
THE SERPENT! WHAT OF THE MIDGARD SERPENT?
ALAS, IT LIVETH STILL!

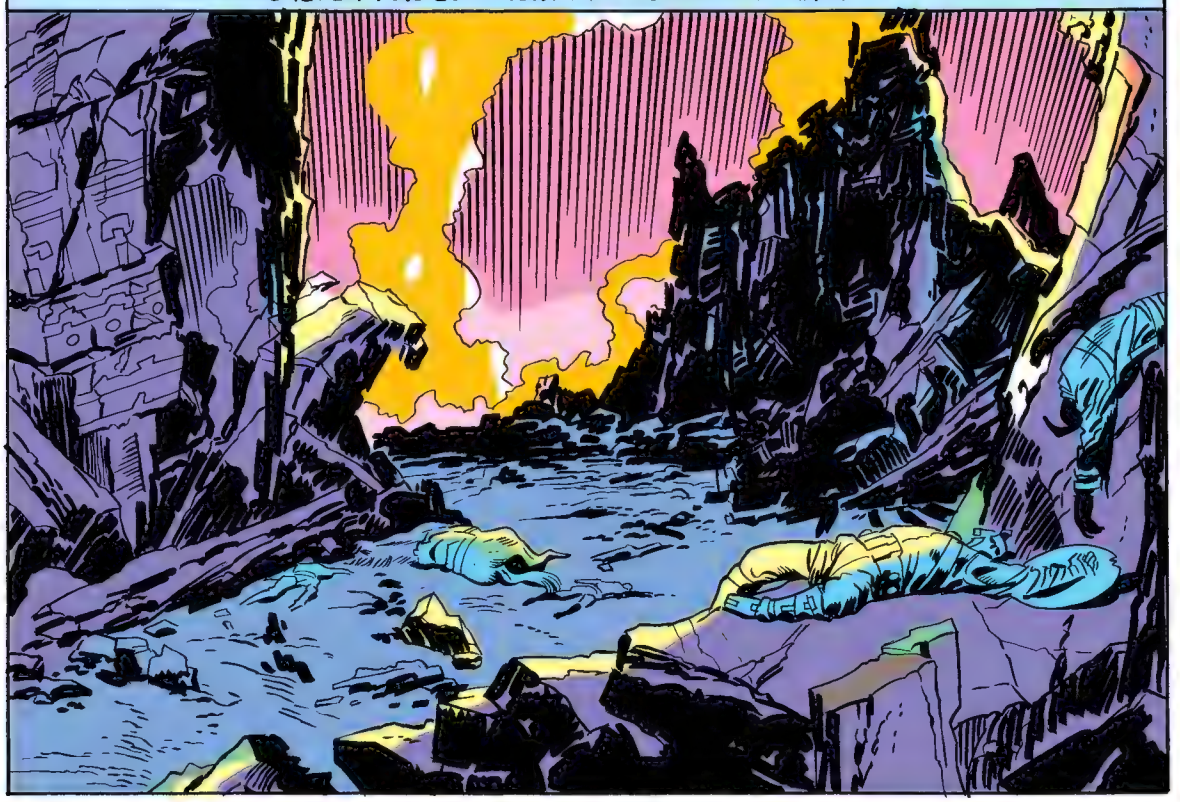
NAY! A THOUSAND TIMES NAY!
IT DOTH HERALD THE BEGINNING OF-- THE END!

IT MUST BE SLAIN!

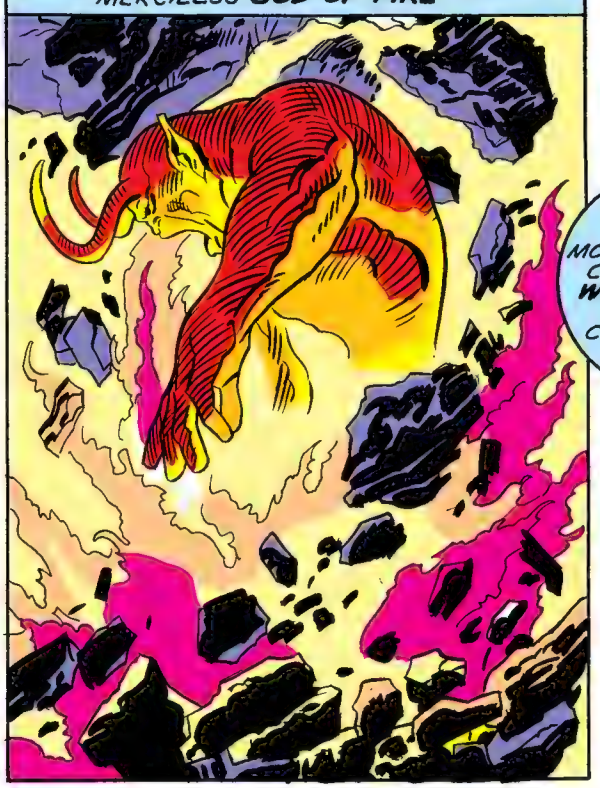

RAGNAROK MUST NOT COME THIS DAY!
THE REALM MUST LIVE-- AND ALL WITHIN!

BTOOM!
AND LIVE IT WILL!
THOOO
"BUT, THOUGH HE SHALL FIGHT AS NO MAN HATH EVER FOUGHT BEFORE--WHEN THE SERPENT FINALLY FALLS--"
"--THE REALM ENTIRE SHALL BE RENT ASUNDER--AND ALL WILL KNOW THE END HATH COME."

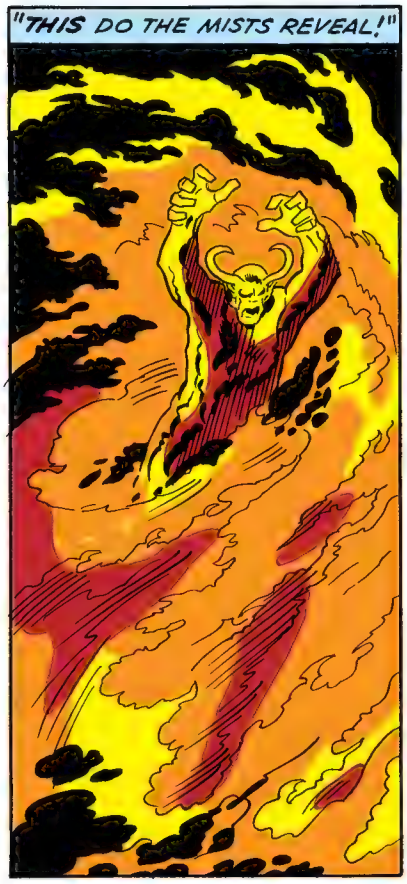
"NOTHING SHALL REMAIN--BUT **SILENCE!** SILENCE--AND THE GRIM, LIFELESS **LITTER**...THE ETERNAL **DESOLATION**...THAT GIVE MUTE EVIDENCE OF AN AGE, A **GLORY**, THAT HATH FOREVER **FADED** FROM THE MEMORY OF MAN.

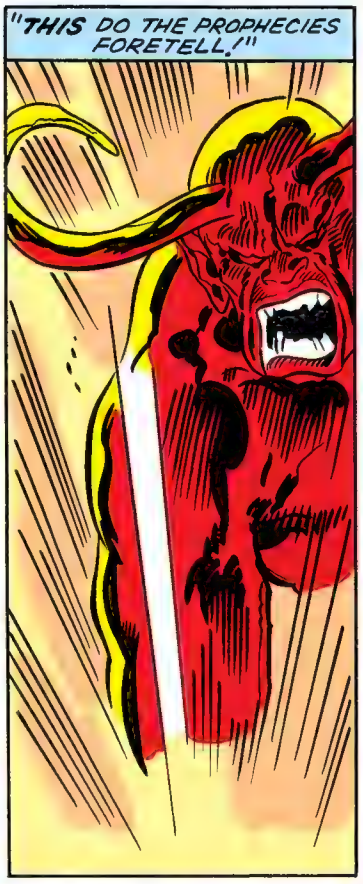


"AND SO, THE STAGE SHALL BE **SET** AT LAST--SET, FOR THE COMING OF **SURTUR**, THE MERCILESS **GOD OF FIRE**--"

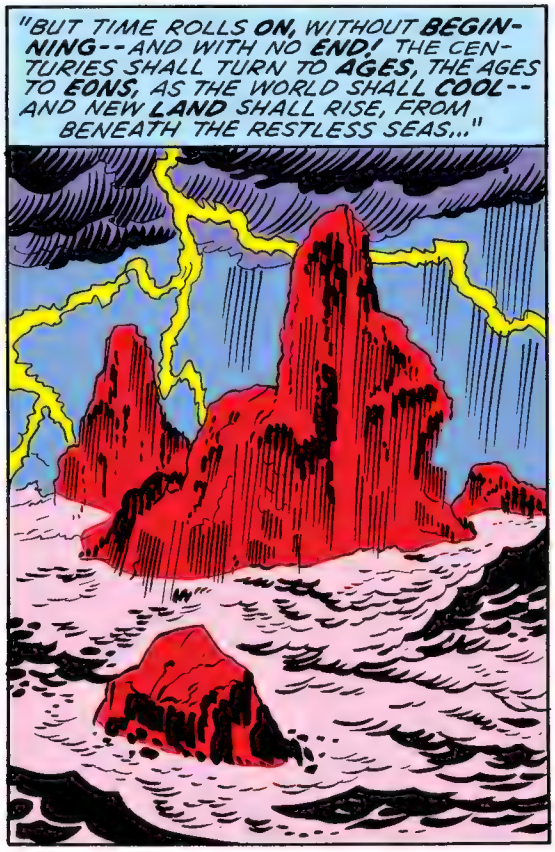


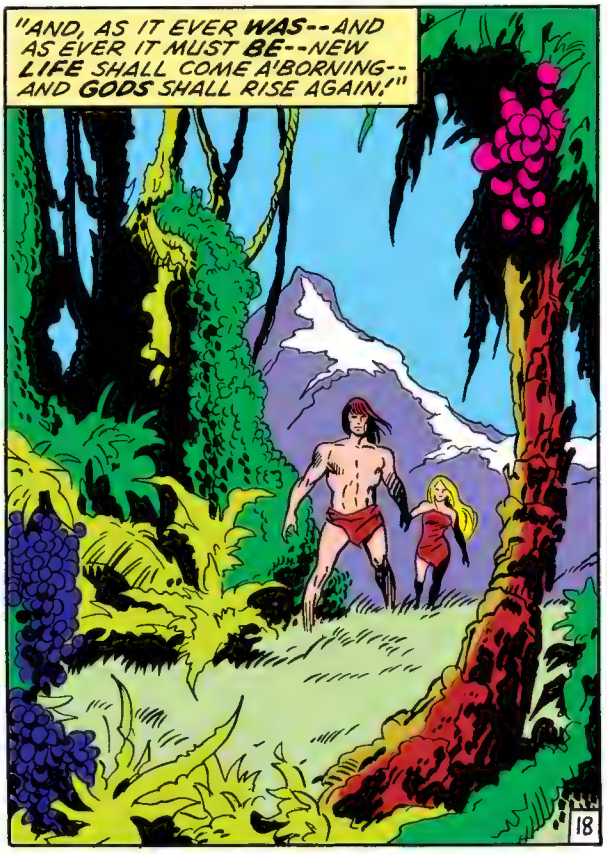
"**SURTUR**, WHO LIVES TO KILL--WHO LIVES FOR **DEATH! SURTUR**, WHO HATH **AWAITED** THIS MOMENT SINCE THE VERY DAWNING OF **TIME**."

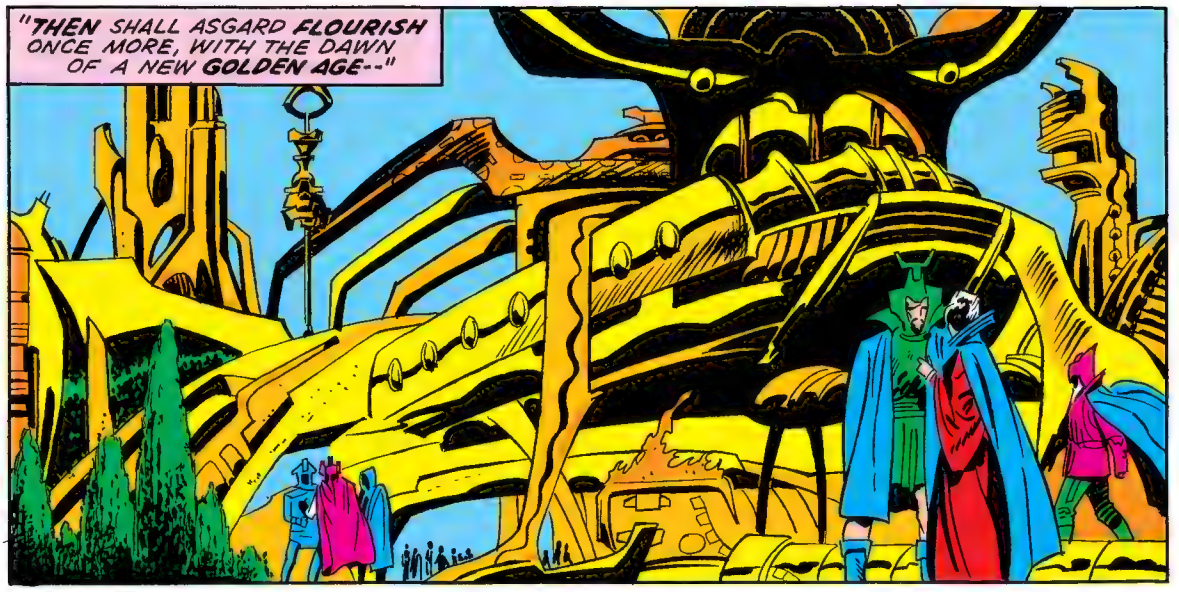

"THIS DO THE MISTS REVEAL!"


"THIS DO THE PROPHECIES FORETELL!"

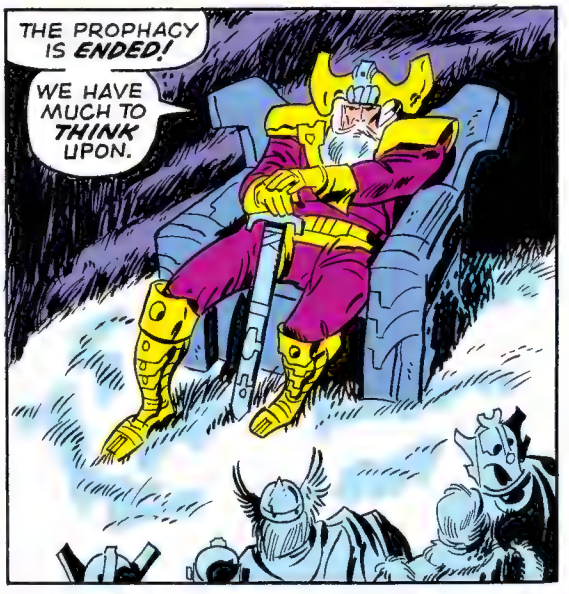
"AND THEN, AT LAST-- NAUGHT SHALL REMAIN OF THE GOLDEN REALM, SAVE A FIERY, FLAMING EMBER--A SMOLDERING, CELESTIAL CINDER IN THE FABRIC OF ETERNITY."


"BUT TIME ROLLS ON, WITHOUT BEGINNING--AND WITH NO END! THE CENTURIES SHALL TURN TO AGES, THE AGES TO EONS, AS THE WORLD SHALL COOL-- AND NEW LAND SHALL RISE, FROM BENEATH THE RESTLESS SEAS..."

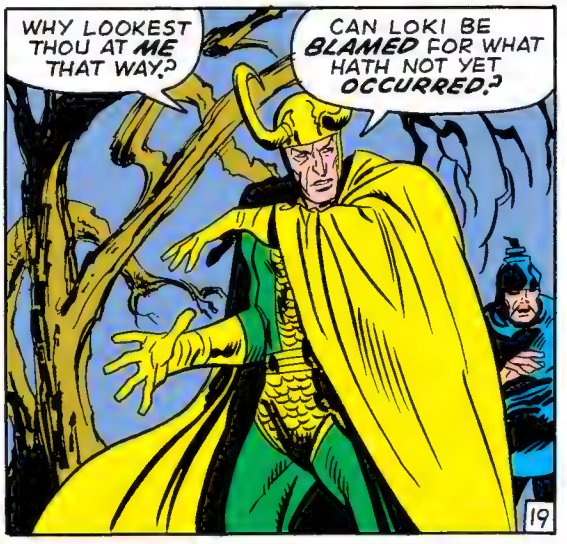

"AND, AS IT EVER WAS--AND AS EVER IT MUST BE--NEW LIFE SHALL COME A'BORNING-- AND GODS SHALL RISE AGAIN!"


"THEN SHALL ASGARD FLOURISH ONCE MORE, WITH THE DAWN OF A NEW GOLDEN AGE--"

FOR SUCH IS THE DESTINY OF GOD AND MAN ALIKE--
AND SUCH IS THE LESSON SUPREME--
ALL THAT LIVE MUST SURELY DIE! BUT, ALL THAT DIE-- SHALL LIVE!


THE PROPHACY IS ENDED!
WE HAVE MUCH TO THINK UPON.

A SAGA OF DEATH HATH BEEN REVEALED-- AND A HOPE OF NEW REBIRTH.


WHY LOOKEST THOU AT ME THAT WAY?
CAN LOKI BE BLAMED FOR WHAT HATH NOT YET OCCURRED?

'TWAS BUT THE HOLLOW CACKLING OF A WORTHLESS HAG! FATHER, THY SON IS BLAMELESS!
TRUE IT IS, THOU ART MY SON--
BUT BLAMELESS THOU SHALT NEVER BE!
YET, 'TIS OF LITTLE MOMENT NOW.
FOR RAGNAROK IS NOT THY DOING.
IF HE BE BLAME-LESS, THEN WHO--?
ODIN HATH ORDAINED IT!
NOT ASGARD ALONE, BUT ALL THE WORLD, HATH NEED OF FIERY CLEANSING.
A TIME MUST COME WHEN ALL SHALL FALL--BUT ONLY SOME WILL RISE AGAIN.
ONLY THOSE DEEMED-- WORTHY!
"LET ALL WHO LIVE NOW THINK UPON IT."
"EACH MAN MUST FACE HIS RAGNAROK! AND, IN HIS SOUL, EACH MAN DOTH KNOW, IF HE WILL BE FOUND-- WANTING!"

AND SLOWLY, THE VISION FADES, AND THE THREE SISTERS REGAIN THEIR BATED BREATHS...
SO, THAT IS THE WAY OF THE FUTURE, THEN?
AY, KLOTHOS... THOR MUST NOT DIE THIS DAY... OR THE WEB OF DESTINY WILL BE PERMANENTLY WARPED.
BUT... WHAT MAY WE DO, SISTER LAESIUS?
WE ARE LIGHT-YEARS AWAY FROM THIS SCENE...
NAY... THOU SPEAKETH TOO QUICKLY, SISTER.
WE HAVE THE POWER TO INTERFERE, AND IF WE MUST--
--THEN WE WILL!
KLOTHOS-- THAT BOLT OF COSMIC ENERGY FROM THY HAND-- IT SHATTERS PLUTO'S MIDNIGHT AXE!
AY, THAT IT DOES, SISTER--
--AND THUS, THOR'S POTENT DESTINY IS RETURNED TO HIM--
--RETURNED BY THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN-- AND WHO DARE--
--WE, THE THREE COLD NORNS--
--WE, THE FATES!
AND WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, THEY PASS AWAY--
--AND RETURN TO THEIR PLACE--IN THE TIMELESS MIST.
NEXT ISSUE
ONCE MORE, AN ENDING!

THOR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
20¢
201
JULY
02450
THE MIGHTY
THOR
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
I AM PLUTO! I AM POWER!
AND, IF ODIN'S LIFE BE NOT MINE FOR THE TAKING--
--THEN I'LL HAVE THOR'S, INSTEAD!!
TO LIVE AGAIN! TO DIE FOREVER!

THE MIGHTY THOR!™

RESURRECTION!
MORNING MIST WETS THE JAGGED BROOKLYN SKYLINE--LENDS A LIGHT HAZE, A GOLDEN AURA WHICH CRESTS BATTERED TENEMENT ROOVES--
IT IS COLD, THIS MORNING ONE WEEK AGO--AND TO THE MEN WORKING ON THE CREAKING BROOKLYN DOCKS, PERHAPS THIS EXPLAINS THE SIGHT BEFORE THEM--
--PERHAPS IT'S ALL AN ILLUSION CAUSED BY THE BITTER MARCH WIND--SOMETHING THEY DON'T SEE--BUT RATHER FEEL IN THEIR STIFF AND FROZEN BONES!
KE-RIPES!
WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?
922

STAN LEE EDITOR PRESENTS: A GERRY CONWAY (SCRIPT) * JOHN BUSCEMA (LAYOUTS) MARVEL MASTERWORK! / JIM MOONEY (FINISHED ART) * ARTIE SIMEK (LETTERING)

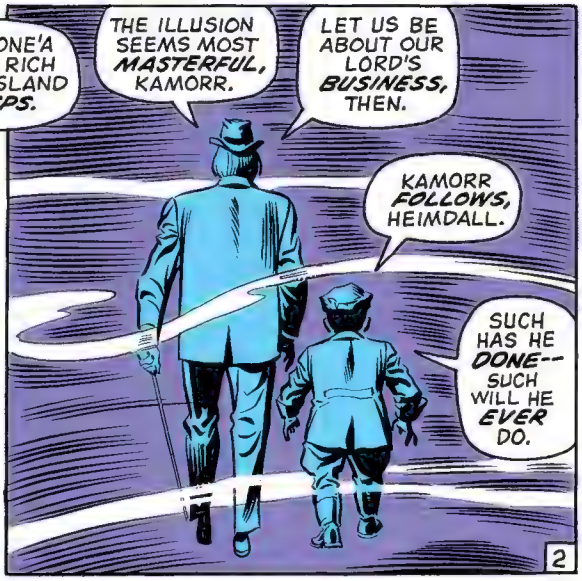
SOME SORTA SPORT RIG, I GUESS--BUT WAIT A SECOND--
TH-THAT GUY--HE'S GOTTA BE AT LEAST SEVEN FEET TALL!
PIE
HEY--HEY, LOOKOUT! HE'S TURNIN' THIS WAY!
IT DOTH APPEAR WE HAVE CREATED A DISTURBANCE, KAMORR.

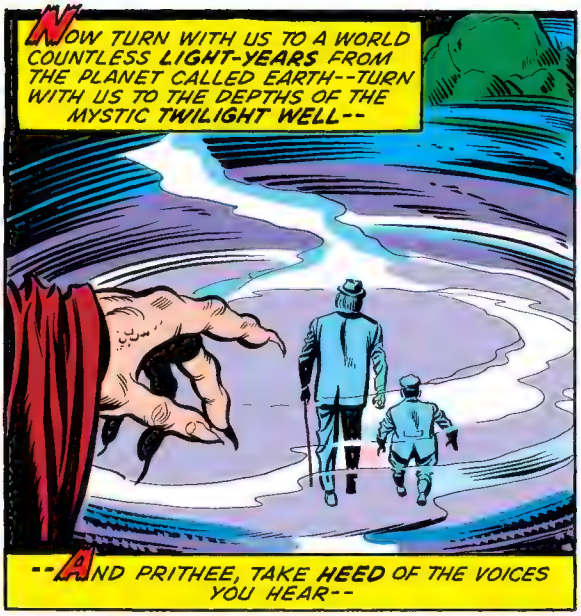
--AND SUCH WAS CERTAINLY NOT ODIN'S PLAN WHEN FIRST HE BADE US TAKE THIS QUEST!
THE MATTER MUST BE RECTIFIED--AT ONCE!
AS THOU DOST WILL, HEIMDALL.
KAMORR THE SMALL HATH NO WILL BUT TO SERVE THEE.

AND WELL THOU HAST, THESE PAST DAYS, LITTLE FRIEND.
NOW OUR JOURNEY DOTH DRAW TO A CLOSE...
...AND ITS LAST LAP MUST BE WITHOUT INCIDENT.
AND BY THE SWORD ODIN DID GIVE THEE--
--SO BE IT!

AMAZEMENT BECOMES CONFUSION--THE DOCKHANDS BLINK, AND SCRATCH THEIR HEADS--
--FOR, WHERE STOOD A MIGHTY VIKING SHIP BUT AN INSTANT BEFORE--
--NOW RESTS A SLEEK YACHT.

Y'KNOW, BERT--I COULD'A SWORN THERE WAS SUMTHIN' STRANGE ABOUT THAT GUY--
--BUT NOW--I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT!
FORGET IT, ERNIE.
JUST ONE'A THOSE RICH LONG ISLAND CREEPS.

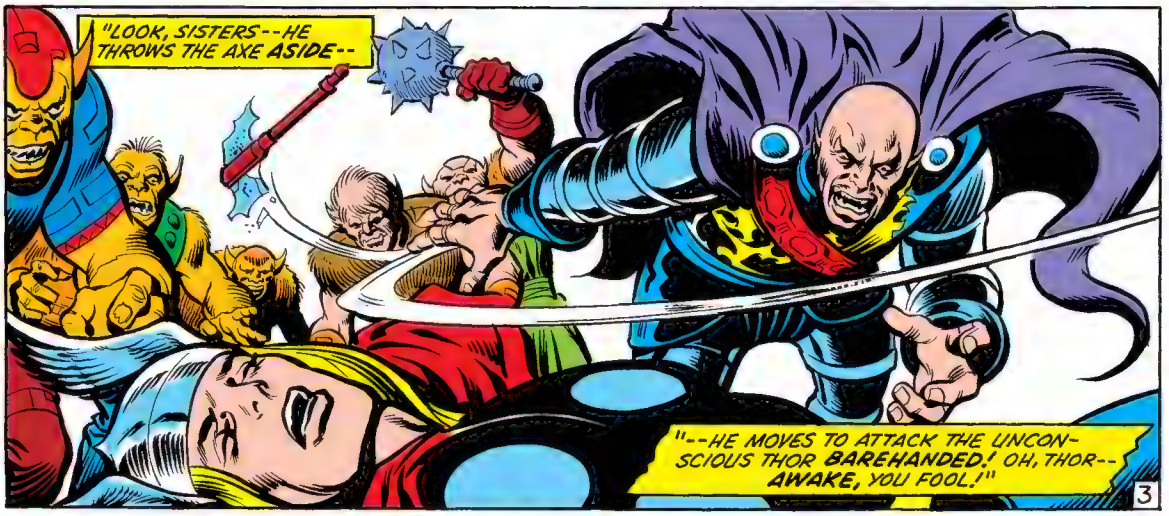

THE ILLUSION SEEMS MOST MASTERFUL, KAMORR.
LET US BE ABOUT OUR LORD'S BUSINESS, THEN.
KAMORR FOLLOWS, HEIMDALL.
SUCH HAS HE DONE--SUCH WILL HE EVER DO.

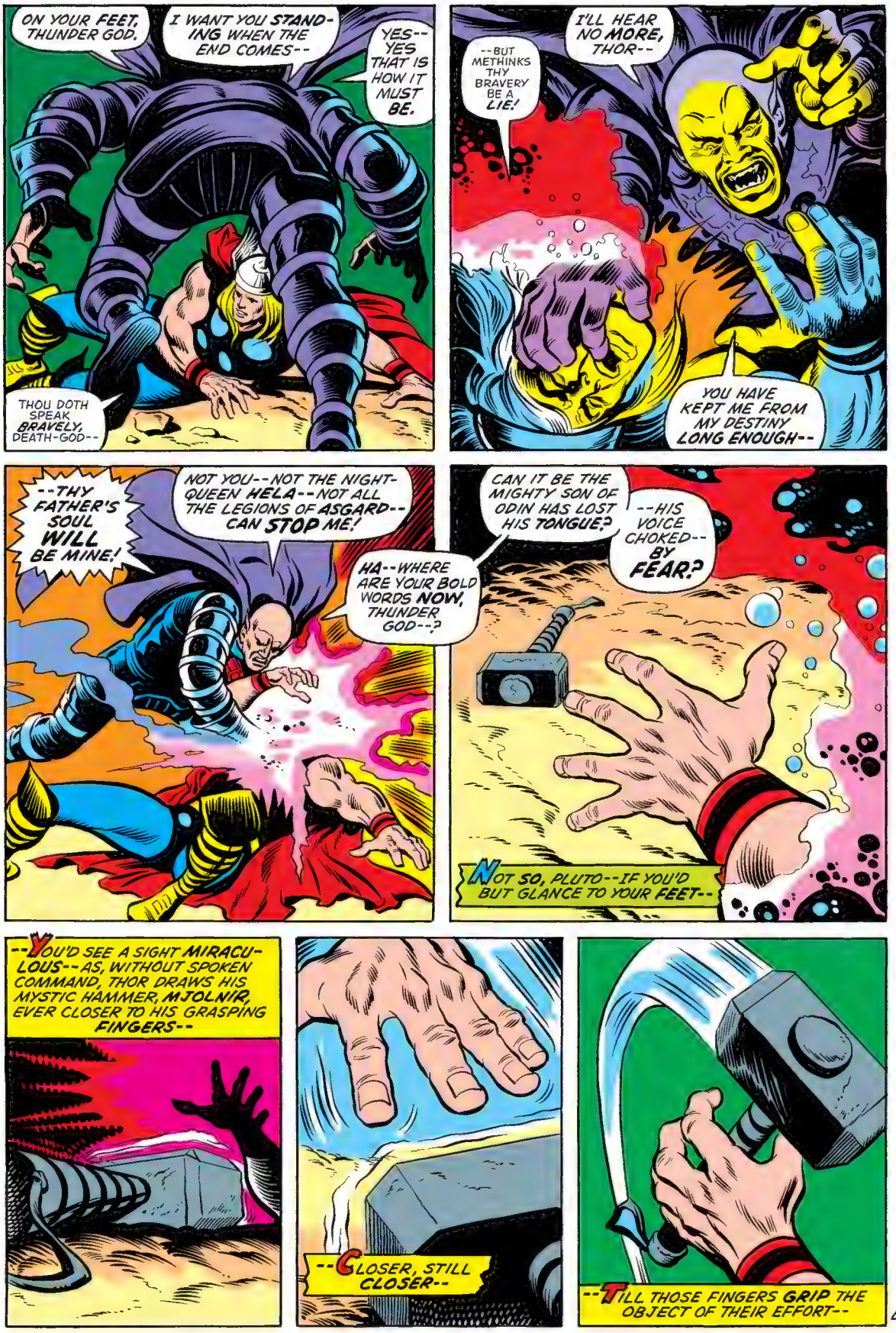

NOW TURN WITH US TO A WORLD COUNTLESS LIGHT-YEARS FROM THE PLANET CALLED EARTH--TURN WITH US TO THE DEPTHS OF THE MYSTIC TWILIGHT WELL--
--AND PRITHEE, TAKE HEED OF THE VOICES YOU HEAR--

--FOR SUCH ARE THE WORDS--OF THE FATES!
SISTER KLOTHOS, WHY DID YOU SUMMON THAT MAN'S IMAGE?
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE PLIGHT OF THE GOD CALLED THOR?
NAY.. BUT THIS GOD, HEIMDALL, INTERESTS ME...
THIS QUEST OF HIS... FOR WHAT DOES HE SEARCH?
ENOUGH OF THIS NONSENSE. LET US SEE THOR.

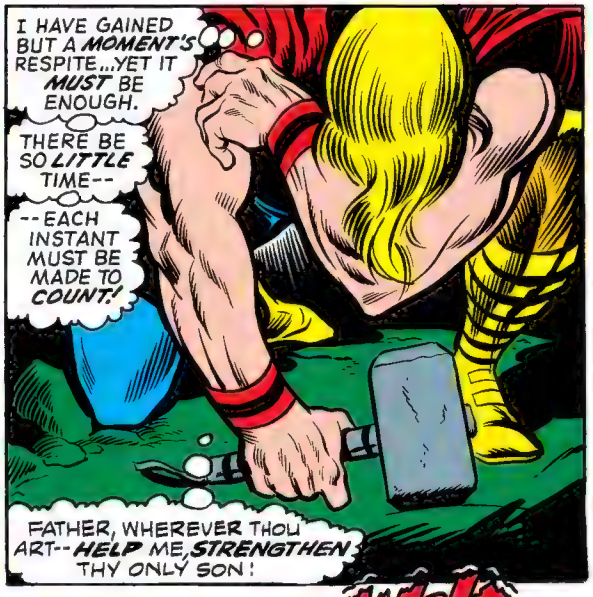
VERY WELL, ATROPOS--
YOU ARE FOREVER CONCERNED WITH THE BEGINNINGS OF THINGS--
--AND NEVER WITH THEIR ENDS!
I LEAVE THAT TO YOU, DEAR LAECIUS.
AHHH...THE THUNDER GOD APPEARS.

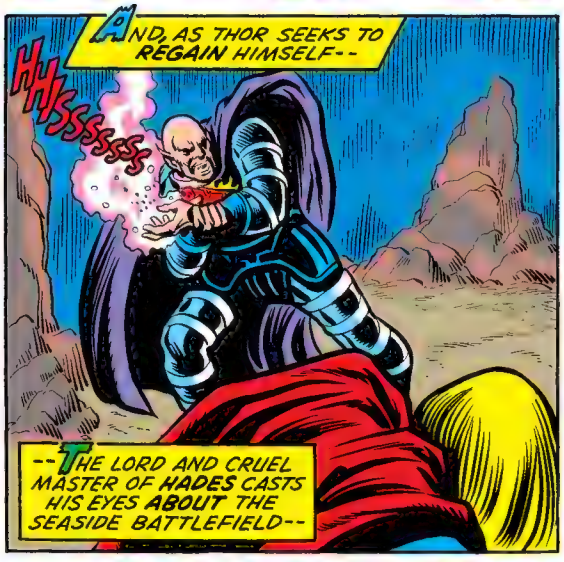
ONLY HIS IMAGE, SISTER.
LOOK-- SEE HOW PLUTO IS ENRAGED?
STILL HIS AXE SMOKES FROM WHEN WE DESTROYED IT!

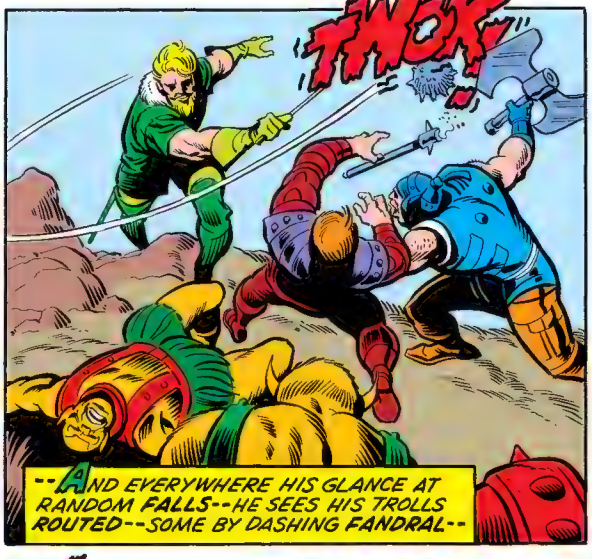

"LOOK, SISTERS--HE THROWS THE AXE ASIDE--
"--HE MOVES TO ATTACK THE UNCONSCIOUS THOR BAREHANDED! OH, THOR-- AWAKE, YOU FOOL!"


ON YOUR FEET, THUNDER GOD.
I WANT YOU STANDING WHEN THE END COMES--
YES--YES THAT IS HOW IT MUST BE.
THOU DOTH SPEAK BRAVELY, DEATH-GOD--
--BUT METHINKS THY BRAVERY BE A LIE!
I'LL HEAR NO MORE, THOR--
YOU HAVE KEPT ME FROM MY DESTINY LONG ENOUGH--
--THY FATHER'S SOUL WILL BE MINE!
NOT YOU--NOT THE NIGHT-QUEEN HELA--NOT ALL THE LEGIONS OF ASGARD--CAN STOP ME!
HA--WHERE ARE YOUR BOLD WORDS NOW, THUNDER GOD--?
CAN IT BE THE MIGHTY SON OF ODIN HAS LOST HIS TONGUE?
--HIS VOICE CHOKED--BY FEAR?
NOT SO, PLUTO--IF YOU'D BUT GLANCE TO YOUR FEET--
--YOU'D SEE A SIGHT MIRACULOUS--AS, WITHOUT SPOKEN COMMAND, THOR DRAWS HIS MYSTIC HAMMER, MJOLNIR, EVER CLOSER TO HIS GRASPING FINGERS--
--CLOSER, STILL CLOSER--
--TILL THOSE FINGERS GRIP THE OBJECT OF THEIR EFFORT--

--AND WITH IT: STRIKE!
WHTOMP!


I HAVE GAINED BUT A MOMENT'S RESPITE...YET IT MUST BE ENOUGH.
THERE BE SO LITTLE TIME--
--EACH INSTANT MUST BE MADE TO COUNT!
FATHER, WHEREVER THOU ART--HELP ME, STRENGTHEN THY ONLY SON!


AND, AS THOR SEEKS TO REGAIN HIMSELF--
HHSSSSSSS
--THE LORD AND CRUEL MASTER OF HADES CASTS HIS EYES ABOUT THE SEASIDE BATTLEFIELD--

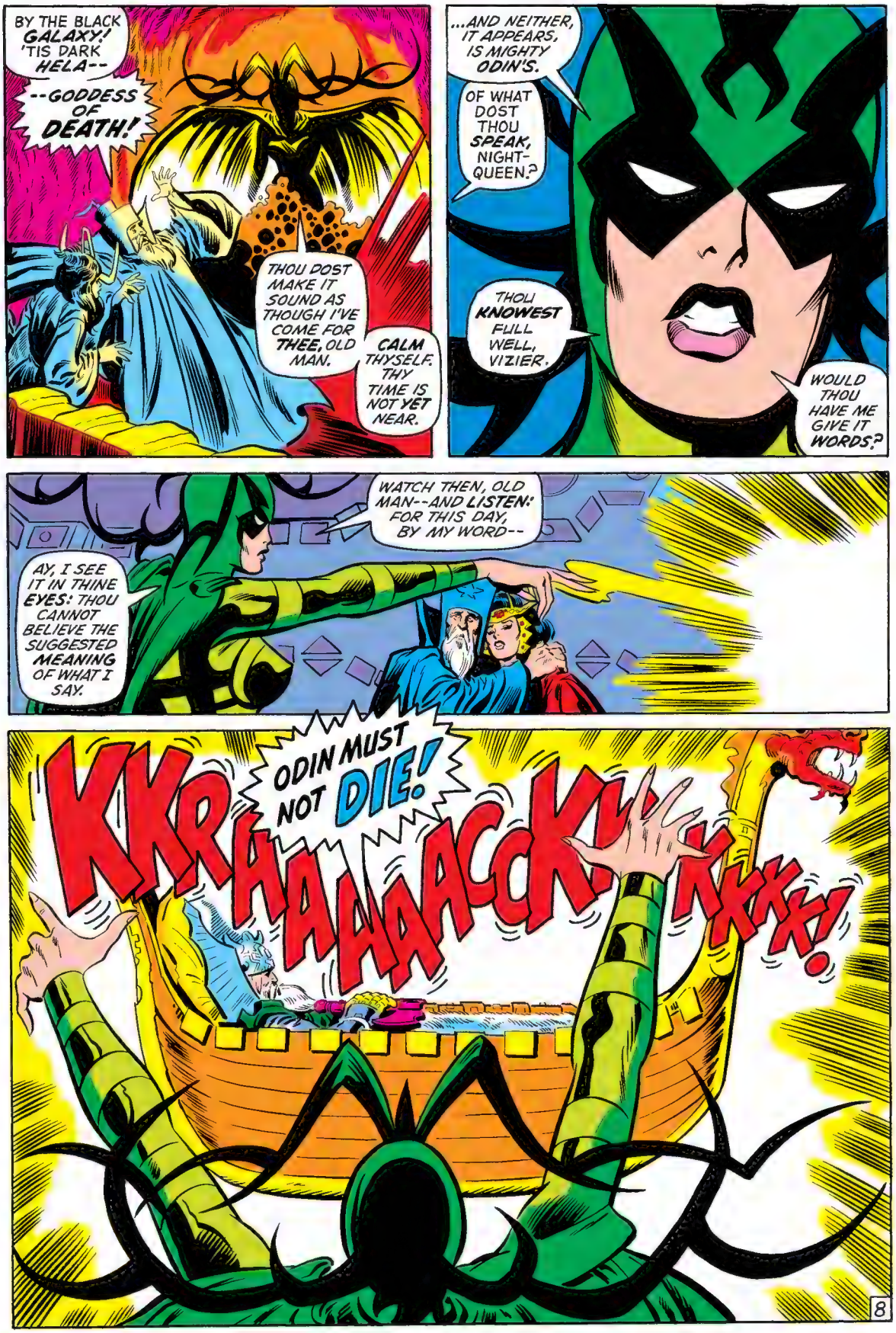

TWOK
--AND EVERYWHERE HIS GLANCE AT RANDOM FALLS--HE SEES HIS TROLLS ROUTED--SOME BY DASHING FANDRAL--

CHOK
--OTHERS BY THE EVER-GRIM HOGUN--

--AND STILL MORE BY THE NOBLE GIRTH OF VOLUMINOUS VOLSTAGG!
WHOMP!
BE THERE NEVER AN END TO THEE, VERMIN?
>:MRRRRMMF!:<

AHHH-- I SEE THE MEANS TO MY GLORIOUS END!
THESE MEN WHO CALL YOU FRIEND, THUNDER GOD--
--THEY BATTLE MOST BOLDLY--
BUT, I THINK-- THEY'LL BATTLE NO MORE!
BY ODIN'S BEARD! WHAT SORCERY IS THIS?
THE WORLD GROWS DARK-- AND DISTANT!
AYE, DOLT--
--YOU THREE ARE BUT VICTIMS OF MY POWER--CAUGHT IN A TIMELESS BUBBLE OF LIMITLESS ENERGY--
--AND THERE SHALL YOU STAY, HELPLESS TO FREE YOURSELVES--
--TILL THE MIGHTY THOR--DOTH SURRENDER.
WHAT SAY YOU, FAIR-HAIR?
AND AS THOR'S SHOULDERS SEEM TO BOW...
...LET US TURN TO A NEARBY PRECIPICE, WHERE STANDS A COLD GRAY TOMB, AND ITS WIZENED, AGING GUARD...
VIZIER! THOU MUST HELP THEM--
--IF PLUTO DOTH STEAL ODIN'S SACRED SOUL, THEN ALL WHO LIVE-- WILL DIE!
SO DOTH IT SEEM, NORN QUEEN.
...AND YET, WHAT CONCERN BE THIS OF YOURS, KARNILLA?
WILL NOT THY VILE MAGIC SAVE THEE...?
YEA... BUT WHAT OF BRAVE BALDER?
'TIS HE I LOVE-- AND HE WILL SURELY FOLLOW THOR.
I SEE. COME INSIDE, CHILD...

...COME INSIDE, AND LOOK THEE UPON THE ALL-FATHER HIMSELF... UPON HIM WHO MORTALS DARE CALL... ODIN!
IN TRUTH, HE SEEMS SO STILL...SO LIFELESS.
DO MEN FIGHT AND DIE... TO SAVE THIS SOULLESS CORPSE?
NAY, WOMAN THY FAITH-LESSNESS BETRAYS THEE.
DOST THOU FORGET SO SOON--? ASGARD STILL DOTH TRAVEL THROUGH THE VOIDS OF TIME AND SPACE--!
ONLY WHEN IT REACHES ITS HOME DIMENSION WILL OUR LAND BE RULED ONCE MORE BY THE LAWS OF NATURAL THINGS--
--AND UNTIL THAT TIME, ODIN'S BODY RESTS WITHIN A MIGHTY SHIELD--
--ONE FORMED BY THOR, THAT HOUR ONE SHORT DAY AGO.*
THOU MAKEST THE MOST MYSTIC THING MUNDANE, OLD MAN.
VERILY, THOU DOTH BORE THE CHILD WITH THY WEIGHTY WORDS.
SUFFICE TO SAY-- SOMEWHERE, ODIN LIVES!
*ISSUE #198 FOR US, BIBLIOPHILES. --STURDY STAN.
7

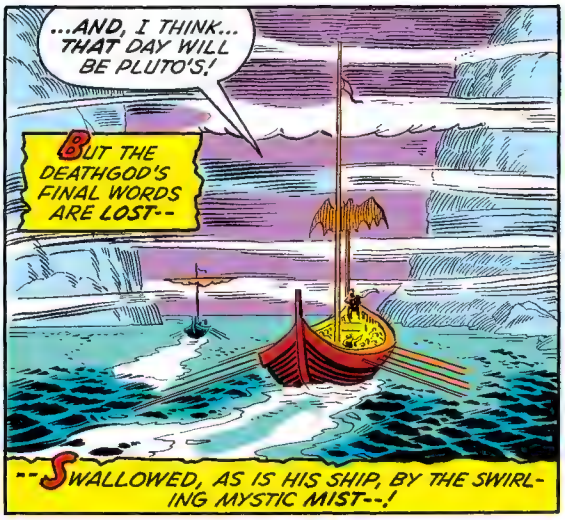

BY THE BLACK GALAXY! 'TIS DARK HELA--
--GODDESS OF DEATH!
THOU DOST MAKE IT SOUND AS THOUGH I'VE COME FOR THEE, OLD MAN.
CALM THYSELF. THY TIME IS NOT YET NEAR.
...AND NEITHER, IT APPEARS, IS MIGHTY ODIN'S.
OF WHAT DOST THOU SPEAK, NIGHT-QUEEN?
THOU KNOWEST FULL WELL, VIZIER.
WOULD THOU HAVE ME GIVE IT WORDS?
WATCH THEN, OLD MAN--AND LISTEN: FOR THIS DAY, BY MY WORD--
AY, I SEE IT IN THINE EYES: THOU CANNOT BELIEVE THE SUGGESTED MEANING OF WHAT I SAY.
ODIN MUST NOT DIE!
KKRHAAAAACCKK!
KKKK!
8

SO THOU DOST SAY-- BUT WHY, MILADY?
I SEEK NOT TO CURSE THE BOON, BUT--
BUT THOU DOST WONDER.
KNOW THEN-- NEITHER PLUTO NOR I CAN WIN OUR FUTILE BATTLE--
--AND RATHER THAN LET HIS FOUL LAND CLAIM ODIN'S NOBLE WORTH--
--I HAVE RETURNED TO MILORD WHAT WAS TAKEN FROM HIM--
--AND NOW, IN MY WEARINESS-- MUST DEPART!
'TIS DONE.
METHINKS WE WITNESSED A DREAM, KARNILLA.
NAUGHT ELSE CAN EXPLAIN WHAT WE HAVE SEEN!
NAY, OLD ONE--'TIS NOT SO!
LOOK... AND PRITHEE, VIZIER, TELL ME...
...DO MY TIRED SENSES LIE?
HAVE THE FEARS O'ERCOME ME...AND STOLEN THE STRENGTH OF MY MIND?
MY LADY... I SEE IT TOO!
YET OUTSIDE, ON THE WIND-SWEPT HEARTH, THOSE UNAWARE OF THE PAST MOMENT'S STRANGE EVENTS DO CONTINUE THEIR BATTLE--
--AS NORSE GOD OF THUNDER-- FACES GRECIAN GOD OF DEATH!
THOU DOST SEEK TO WEAKEN MY RESOLVE, PLUTO--
--BUT KNOW THEE, GOD MOST VILE--
THOU HAST ONLY STRENGTHENED IT!
9

THOUGH TRULY THEY ARE MY FRIENDS--
PTOK!
--I'D NOT HAVE THEM LIVE--
--IN A WORLD DOMINATED BY THEE!
:UNNNNH!:
THEN 'TIS ON YOUR HEAD, ASGARDIAN--
YOU HAVE CAST THEM FREE!
WE CANNOT SEE!
LORD THOR-- ALL IS BLACK--!
BUT, THUNDER GOD--GIVE US NO GRIEF--
--INSTEAD, PRAY THAT WE END--IN VAL-HAAALLLLAAAAA!
HOGUN!
THEY DO VANISH... AND THE AIR, ONCE SO CLEAN,..STINKS NOW OF BURNING SULPHUR.
THOU SHALT REGRET THIS DEED, MADMAN!
NOT I, BOY. NAY... YOU WILL BEAR THE SORROW.
YOUR BLIND LOYALTY COST THEM THEIR LIVES--AND YOU KNOW THIS, THOR!
--FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE --YOU'LL KNOW THIS!
BTOOM!
10

BROTHERS, THE MASTER NEEDS OUR AID! THAT TREE--
WE MUST--
--KEEP YOUR FILTHY CLAWS OFF ME, YOU MINDLESS MISCREANT!
I'LL BEG NO HELP FROM THE LIKES OF YOU!
NAY, PLUTO TOO KNOWS THE COURSE OF HONOR--
--AND IN HIS HANDS RESTS-- MIGHT UNEQUALED!
HAVE DONE WITH WORDS, THUNDER GOD--
--HAVE DONE WITH TALK OF LOYALTY AND LOVE.
YOU SPEAK AS THOUGH HONOR LIVES IN YOUR HEART ONLY--
WTUMP!
--YET WHAT CAN YOU KNOW OF HONOR, ASGARDIAN?
HAVE YOU SLAVED BENEATH THE EARTH'S DARK SURFACE--
HAVE YOU RULED THE KINGDOM NO OTHER GOD WOULD TOUCH?
SPEAK NOT TO ME OF HONOR, NOBLE SON OF ODIN--
--I KNOW ITS LIES--
--AND AFTER EON UPON EON OF ITS BLACK BETRAYAL--
--I HAVE HAD ENOW!
VILLAIN, DO THY WORST! THY ACTIONS DO GIVE PROOF TO THY WICKEDNESS!
YET E'EN AS PLUTO'S RAGING FEATURES CONTORT--E'EN AS HIS HAND DOTH TIGHTEN, POWER SURGING TO HIS FINGERTIPS--
--THERE COMES SOUND! THERE COMES FURY!
I SAY THEE HOLD!

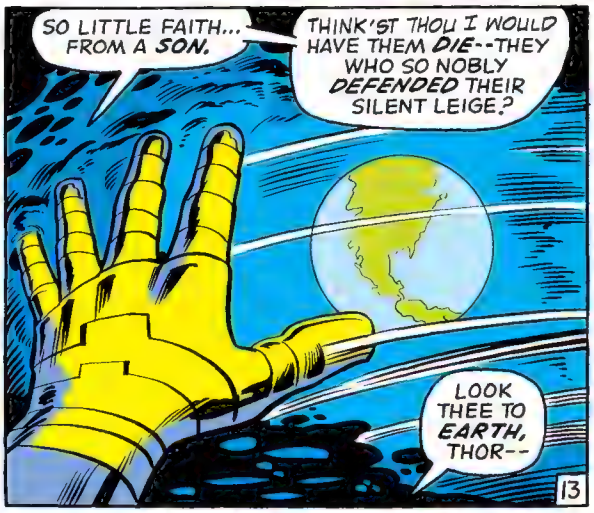
SILENCE FALLS, A GRIM WEIGHT O'ER THE SHADOWED VISAGES OF THOSE WHO WAR--
--AND, AS THOUGH FRIGHTENED OF WHAT THEY MAY SEE, THEY TURN BUT SLOWLY--
--AND REGAL ODIN DO BEHOLD!
MY SON, LET THERE BE AN END TO USELESS BATTLE.
THE PURPOSE HATH PASSED--
--THY FATHER DOTH LIVE.
FOR ONE TIMELESS INSTANT, ASGARD'S LEGIONS STAND IN STRUCK DISBELIEF--
--THEN, AS ONE, THEIR ARMS REACH STARWARD, AND THEIR VOICES JOIN IN THE ETERNAL CRY--
ALL HAIL ODIN! ODIN!
--AND MORE THAN ODIN DOTH RETURN TO LIFE!
NO! IT CANNOT BE! WHAT INSANE DESTINY HATH THWARTED MINE OWN?
I SENSE DARK HELA'S HAND IN THIS!
QUESTION NOT THE CAUSE, PLUTO.
INSTEAD, GRANT THE EFFECT...
...AND GET THEE GONE FROM ASGARD'S SHORE.
AY, I'LL LEAVE, GOOD KING... FOR NOW.
BUT METHINKS THERE'LL BE ANOTHER DAY FOR US, MILORD...
12


...AND, I THINK... THAT DAY WILL BE PLUTO'S!
BUT THE DEATHGOD'S FINAL WORDS ARE LOST--
--SWALLOWED, AS IS HIS SHIP, BY THE SWIRLING MYSTIC MIST--!

AND SO, WITHIN THE FLEETING HOUR--
NOBLE THOR, THOU DOST APPEAR TOO GRIM.
IS NOT ALL WELL WITH THE WORLD, ONCE MORE?

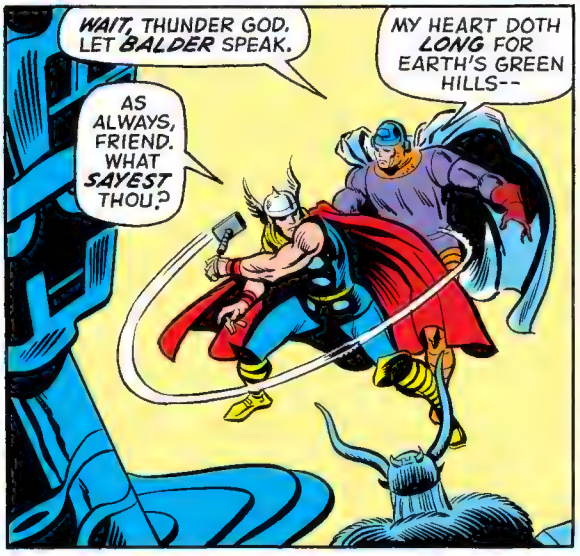
OR DOTH THY MIND YET LEAP TO OTHER CONCERNS?
CONCERNS OF THE HEART, MAYHAP?
YEA, I SEE 'TIS SO! THINK'ST THOU OF SIF--AND WONDER WHENCE I'VE SENT HER?
NAY, MILORD.
I TROW THOU WOULDST NE'ER LET HER COME TO HARM--

--BUT THERE ARE THOSE WHOSE LIVES THY HAND DID NOT TOUCH.
FRIENDS FANDRAL, HOGUN... AND NOBLE VOLSTAGG.
'TWERE THEY WHOM PLUTO... DESTROYED.


SO LITTLE FAITH... FROM A SON.
THINK'ST THOU I WOULD HAVE THEM DIE--THEY WHO SO NOBLY DEFENDED THEIR SILENT LEIGE?
LOOK THEE TO EARTH, THOR--

"--AND KNOW THEE, SON, THAT WHEN I DID AWAKE FROM MY DEATH-LIKE TRANCE, I INSTANTLY SENSED THY COMRADES' PLIGHT--
"--AND BY MY POWER, DID DEFLECT PLUTO'S INTENT, AND SENT THEM INSTEAD--TO THE MIDDLE LAND."

BY THIS TOO IS MY DEBT TO THEE INCREASED, MILORD.
I PRAY THY LEAVE-- LET ME JOIN THEM, FATHER. METHINKS THEY'LL NEED A FRIEND ON THAT MAD WORLD.
AS THOU DOST WILL, THOR.
THOU HAST MY LEAVE. MAY THY JOURNEY GO WELL, MY SON.


WAIT, THUNDER GOD. LET BALDER SPEAK.
MY HEART DOTH LONG FOR EARTH'S GREEN HILLS--
AS ALWAYS, FRIEND. WHAT SAYEST THOU?

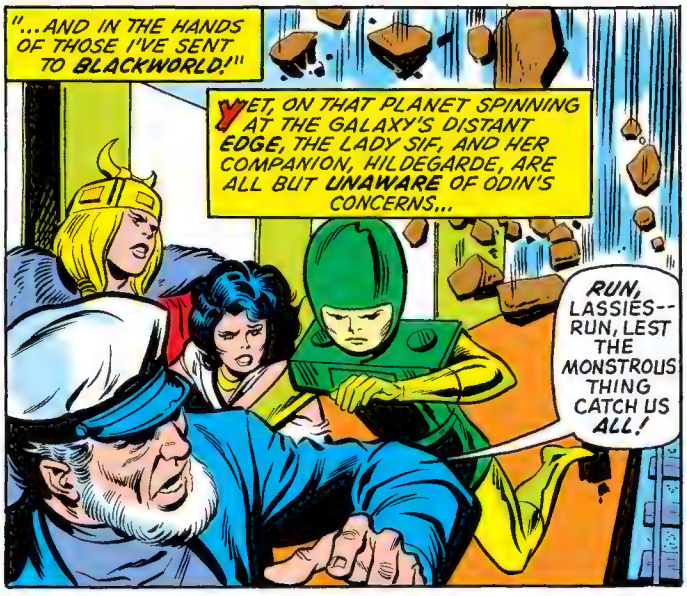
--AND IF MILADY KARNILLA WOULD BUT RELEASE ME FROM MY PLEDGE TO HER--
--I WOULD ACCOMPANY THEE.
HAVE IT THY WAY, BALDER.
WELL, MY LADY?
IT APPEARS I'VE NO HOLD ON THEE...
...IF EVER I HAD.

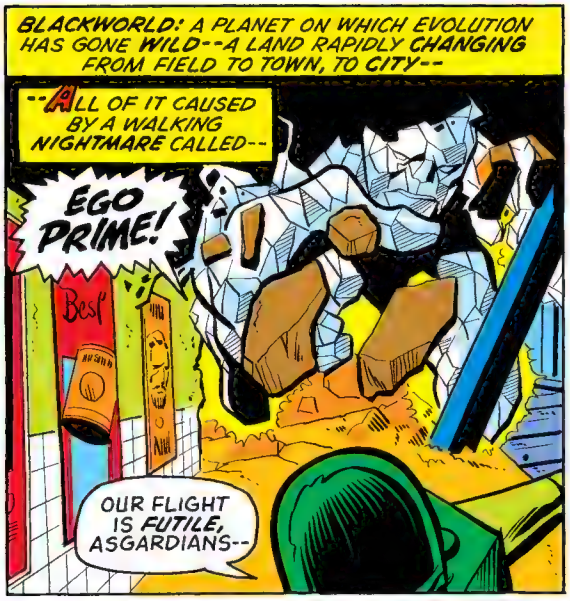
THEN LET US BEGONE, BRAVE BALDER--
LET MYSTIC MJOLNIR STEAL US ELSEWHERE--AND YEA, ELSEWHEN, AS WELL--
--TO EARTH, MILORD-- TO EARTH!

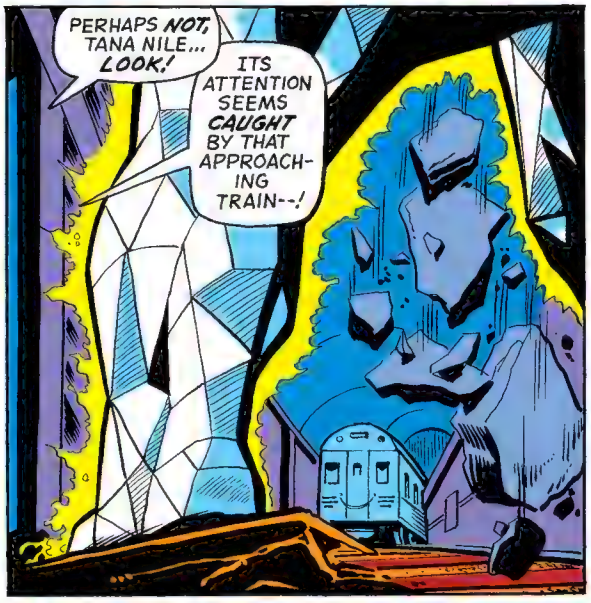
LORD ODIN, IS BALDER TRULY BLIND?
CAN HE NOT SEE... MY UNDYING LOVE?
'TIS NOT FOR THEE TO KNOW, NORN QUEEN... YET.

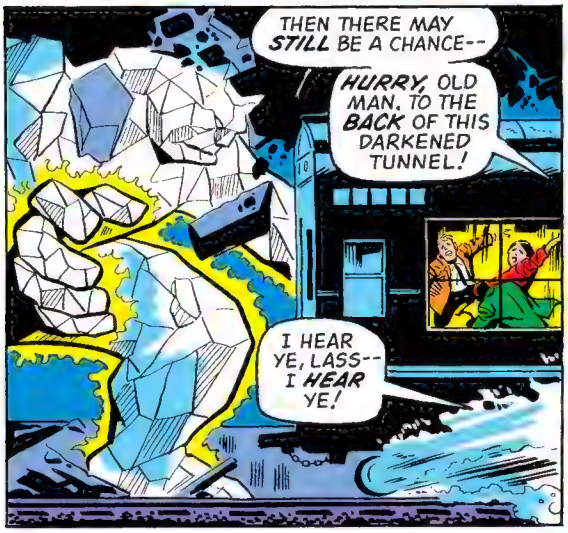
...FOR NOW, ALL IS CALM IN ASGARD ONCE MORE.
MY PLAN DOTH PROCEED...ON EARTH.
PLAN, MILORD?
AY, VIZIER.

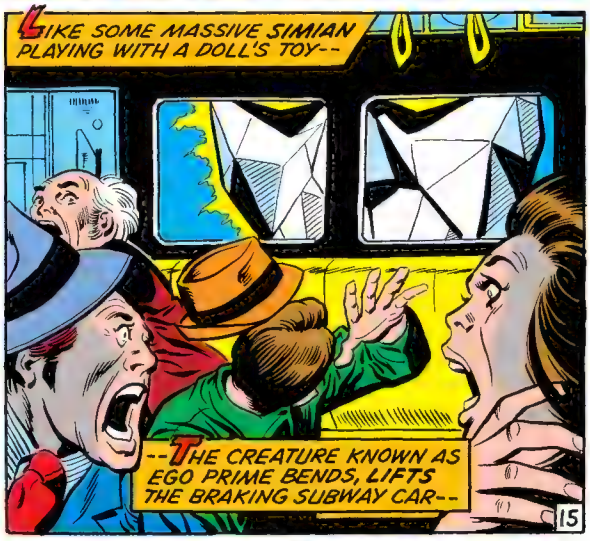
...A PLAN OF SUCH SCOPE THY MIND COULD SCARCE CONCEIVE ITS LIMITS.
BUT I MAY SAY NO MORE, FRIEND...
..'TIS ALL IN HEIMDAL'S HANDS NOW...

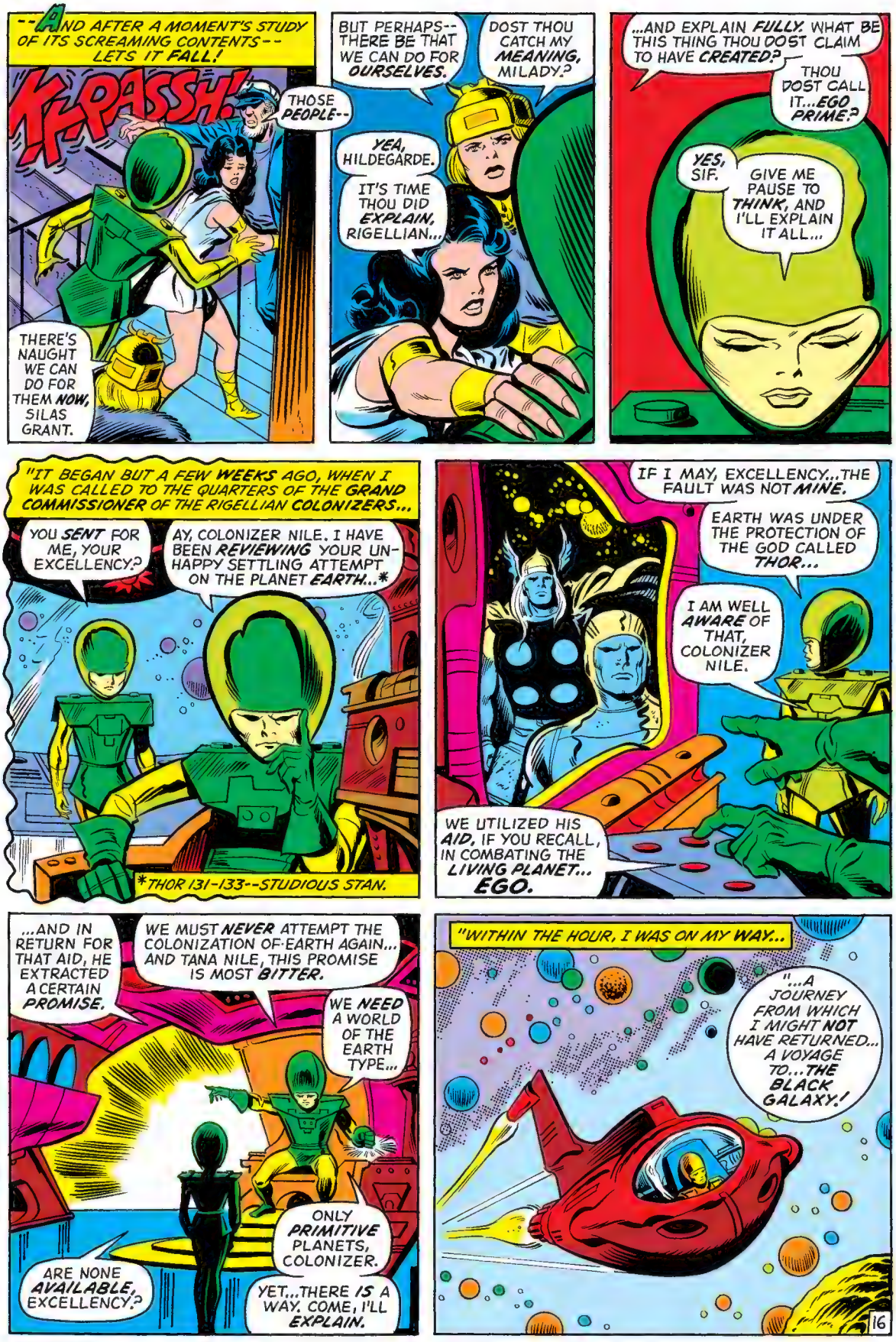

"...AND IN THE HANDS OF THOSE I'VE SENT TO BLACKWORLD!"
YET, ON THAT PLANET SPINNING AT THE GALAXY'S DISTANT EDGE, THE LADY SIF, AND HER COMPANION, HILDEGARDE, ARE ALL BUT UNAWARE OF ODIN'S CONCERNS...
RUN, LASSIES--RUN, LEST THE MONSTROUS THING CATCH US ALL!

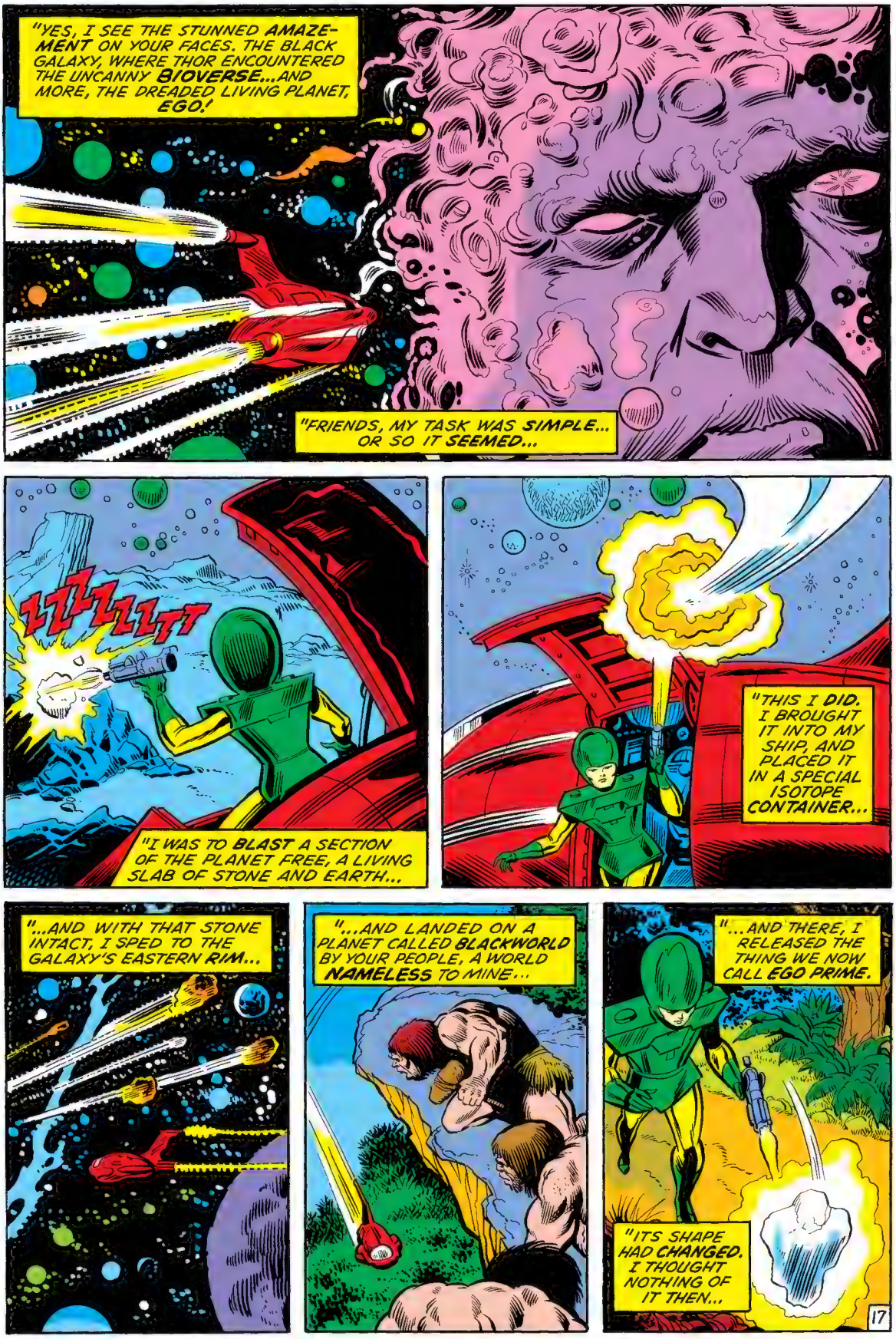

BLACKWORLD: A PLANET ON WHICH EVOLUTION HAS GONE WILD--A LAND RAPIDLY CHANGING FROM FIELD TO TOWN, TO CITY--
--ALL OF IT CAUSED BY A WALKING NIGHTMARE CALLED--
EGO PRIME!
Best
OUR FLIGHT IS FUTILE, ASGARDIANS--


PERHAPS NOT, TANA NILE... LOOK!
ITS ATTENTION SEEMS CAUGHT BY THAT APPROACHING TRAIN--!


THEN THERE MAY STILL BE A CHANCE--
HURRY, OLD MAN, TO THE BACK OF THIS DARKENED TUNNEL!
I HEAR YE, LASS--I HEAR YE!


LIKE SOME MASSIVE SIMIAN PLAYING WITH A DOLL'S TOY--
--THE CREATURE KNOWN AS EGO PRIME BENDS, LIFTS THE BRAKING SUBWAY CAR--

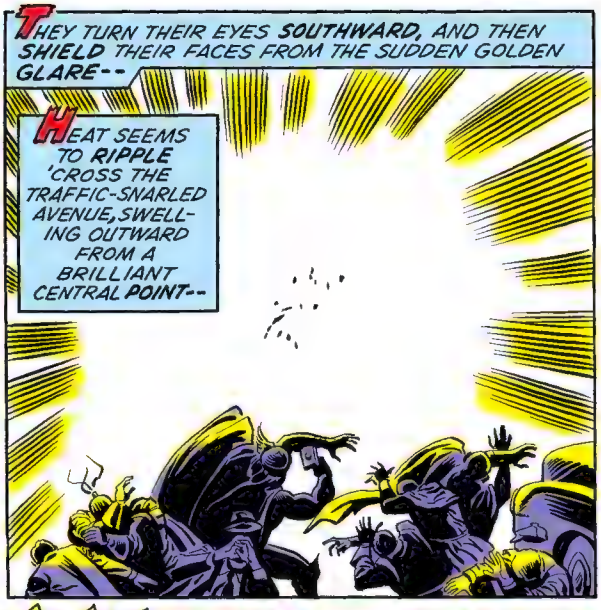

--AND AFTER A MOMENT'S STUDY OF ITS SCREAMING CONTENTS--LETS IT FALL!
KF-PASSH!
THOSE PEOPLE--
THERE'S NAUGHT WE CAN DO FOR THEM NOW, SILAS GRANT.
BUT PERHAPS--THERE BE THAT WE CAN DO FOR OURSELVES.
DOST THOU CATCH MY MEANING, MILADY?
YEA, HILDEGARDE.
IT'S TIME THOU DID EXPLAIN, RIGELLIAN...
...AND EXPLAIN FULLY, WHAT BE THIS THING THOU DOST CLAIM TO HAVE CREATED?
THOU DOST CALL IT...EGO PRIME?
YES, SIF.
GIVE ME PAUSE TO THINK, AND I'LL EXPLAIN IT ALL...
"IT BEGAN BUT A FEW WEEKS AGO, WHEN I WAS CALLED TO THE QUARTERS OF THE GRAND COMMISSIONER OF THE RIGELLIAN COLONIZERS...
YOU SENT FOR ME, YOUR EXCELLENCY?
AY, COLONIZER NILE. I HAVE BEEN REVIEWING YOUR UNHAPPY SETTLING ATTEMPT ON THE PLANET EARTH...*
*THOR 131-133--STUDIOUS STAN.
IF I MAY, EXCELLENCY...THE FAULT WAS NOT MINE.
EARTH WAS UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE GOD CALLED THOR...
I AM WELL AWARE OF THAT, COLONIZER NILE.
WE UTILIZED HIS AID, IF YOU RECALL, IN COMBATING THE LIVING PLANET... EGO.
...AND IN RETURN FOR THAT AID, HE EXTRACTED A CERTAIN PROMISE.
WE MUST NEVER ATTEMPT THE COLONIZATION OF EARTH AGAIN... AND TANA NILE, THIS PROMISE IS MOST BITTER.
WE NEED A WORLD OF THE EARTH TYPE...
ONLY PRIMITIVE PLANETS, COLONIZER.
ARE NONE AVAILABLE, EXCELLENCY?
YET...THERE IS A WAY. COME, I'LL EXPLAIN.
"WITHIN THE HOUR, I WAS ON MY WAY...
"...A JOURNEY FROM WHICH I MIGHT NOT HAVE RETURNED... A VOYAGE TO...THE BLACK GALAXY!
16


"YES, I SEE THE STUNNED AMAZEMENT ON YOUR FACES. THE BLACK GALAXY, WHERE THOR ENCOUNTERED THE UNCANNY BIOVERSE...AND MORE, THE DREADED LIVING PLANET, EGO!
"FRIENDS, MY TASK WAS SIMPLE... OR SO IT SEEMED...
ZZZZZZZZT
"I WAS TO BLAST A SECTION OF THE PLANET FREE, A LIVING SLAB OF STONE AND EARTH...
"THIS I DID. I BROUGHT IT INTO MY SHIP, AND PLACED IT IN A SPECIAL ISOTOPE CONTAINER...
"...AND WITH THAT STONE INTACT, I SPED TO THE GALAXY'S EASTERN RIM...
"...AND LANDED ON A PLANET CALLED BLACKWORLD BY YOUR PEOPLE, A WORLD NAMELESS TO MINE...
"...AND THERE, I RELEASED THE THING WE NOW CALL EGO PRIME.
"ITS SHAPE HAD CHANGED. I THOUGHT NOTHING OF IT THEN...
17

"INSTEAD, I CONTINUED TO FOCUS ENERGY THROUGH ITS GROWING, ALMOST CANCEROUS FORM...
"A GOLDEN RAY ARCED FROM ITS 'SHOULDERS'...
"...AND WHEN IT BURST UPON THE TWISTED FOLIAGE HUNDREDS OF YARDS AWAY, LIGHTNING AMIDST THE STINKING TROPICAL MIST...
"...THE MAN-APES WHO POPULATED THE PLANET...EVOLVED.
"THE WORLD ITSELF CHANGED, THE JUNGLE GROWTH DECAYING, FALLING AWAY...
"MY FRIENDS, I WAS ECSTATIC. IT SEEMED AS THOUGH OUR DIFFICULTIES WERE ENDED.
IF THIS PROCESS CAN BE REPEATED....!
--ALL OURS FOR THE TAKING!
STARS! WORLDS TOO HOT-- WORLDS TOO COLD--
"AND THEN IT HAPPENED. I'D NO INTENTION OF CREATING MORE THAN A HABITABLE WORLD, YOU MUST BELIEVE THAT...
"...BUT EGO PRIME, IT SEEMS, HAD OTHER PLANS...
THAT RAY-- OH, NO-- NO!
"ALREADY, THE EVOLUTIONARY RAYS RADIATING FROM ITS STONE BODY WERE OUT OF CONTROL-- I TURNED TO STOP IT--
"--BUT IT TOO HAD EVOLVED--HAD BECOME ALMOST WHAT YOU SEE NOW--
--A MONSTER, A HIDEOUS MOCKERY OF HUMANOID LIFE.
I WAS TRYING TO REGAIN MY LOST CONTROL WHEN YOU FOUND ME...
...BUT IT'S USELESS. EGO PRIME HAS A MIND OF ITS OWN...
...AND ONLY THE PRIME DIRECTOR KNOWS WHAT IT PLANS!
18

PERHAPS IT'S READ THY MIND, RIGELLIAN.
WITHOUT DOUBT, THOU WOULDST HAVE MADE THIS EARTH... AND SAVED THY HONOR IF THOU COULD... NAY?
PERHAPS THAT'S SO, HILDEGARDE.
BUT WAIT-- THAT PAPER--!
MILADY... WHAT MEANS THIS?
THESE WORDS...
NUCLEAR WAR IMMINENT!
NAY... NAY, IT CANNOT BE!
BLACKWORLD PARALLELS EARTH TOO CLOSELY...
... ITS PEOPLE ARE UNPREPARED FOR THESE MAD WEAPONS OF WAR!
AND IF THE SPEED BE TOO GREAT, THEN--
--BUT THE GODDESS SIF NE'ER COMPLETES HER FATAL PRONOUNCEMENT--
--FOR AT THAT INSTANT, AN ALL-CONSUMING NUCLEAR EXPLOSION CUTS OFF HER WORDS--
AN EXPLOSION SO GREAT, NONE REMAIN TO HEAR ITS SOUND!
WHILE, INSTANTS BEFORE, ON THE PLANET EARTH:
...YET, 'TIS ALL I CAN DO TO TAKE A BREATH!
STRANGE. I'D THOUGHT IT WOULD BE GOOD TO BREATHE EARTH'S AIR AGAIN...
MILORD... LOOK THEE BELOW.
GET THEE BACK, MONSTER--
IF THIS BE HADES, I'LL FIGHT HERE AS I FOUGHT ABOVE!
HOLD THY HAND, HOGUN.
...'TIS NOT THAT LAND, METHINKS.
FANDRAL, HOGUN... E'EN LOUD VOLSTAGG.
FEAR NOT, FRIENDS... THY LIVES BE NOT AT AN END.
THOU DOST STAND ON EARTH.
...AND I DOST STAND STILL, BUDDY.
GET THOSE CREEPS OUTTA THE STREET, WILLYA, PAL?

KEEP THY PEACE, MORTAL. WE'LL SOON ENOUGH BE ON OUR WAY.
NOW LET US-- BY ODIN'S BEARD-- WHAT?


THEY TURN THEIR EYES SOUTHWARD, AND THEN SHIELD THEIR FACES FROM THE SUDDEN GOLDEN GLARE--
HEAT SEEMS TO RIPPLE 'CROSS THE TRAFFIC-SNARLED AVENUE, SWELLING OUTWARD FROM A BRILLIANT CENTRAL POINT--

--AND THEN, THEY APPEAR!
THEY LAND RUNNING, HAIR SWEPT BACK BY THE CHILL EARTH WIND--EYES WIDE WITH FEAR AND SHOCK, AND AS THEY RUN, THEY CRY OUT--THEIR VOICES RINGING WITH HORROR--
FLEE, THOR-- FLEE!
NONE MAY STAND-- AGAINST EGO PRIME!
NEXT: CHAOS!

THOR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP™
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THE MIGHTY
THOR
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
EGO-PRIME VS. THE EARTH!

THE MIGHTY THOR!™

HERE BE THE **BRAVE:** THE RIGELLIAN ADVENTURESS CALLED **TANA NILE;** THE ASGARDIAN WARRIORS--**BALDER, HOGUN,** AND **VOLSTAGG;** THE COARSE GODDESS, **HILDEGARDE;** THE AGED SEA-DOG, **SILAS GRANT** AND MORE--**THE GOD OF THUNDER, THOR!**

--AND NONE DARE STAND 'GAINST EGO-PRIME!

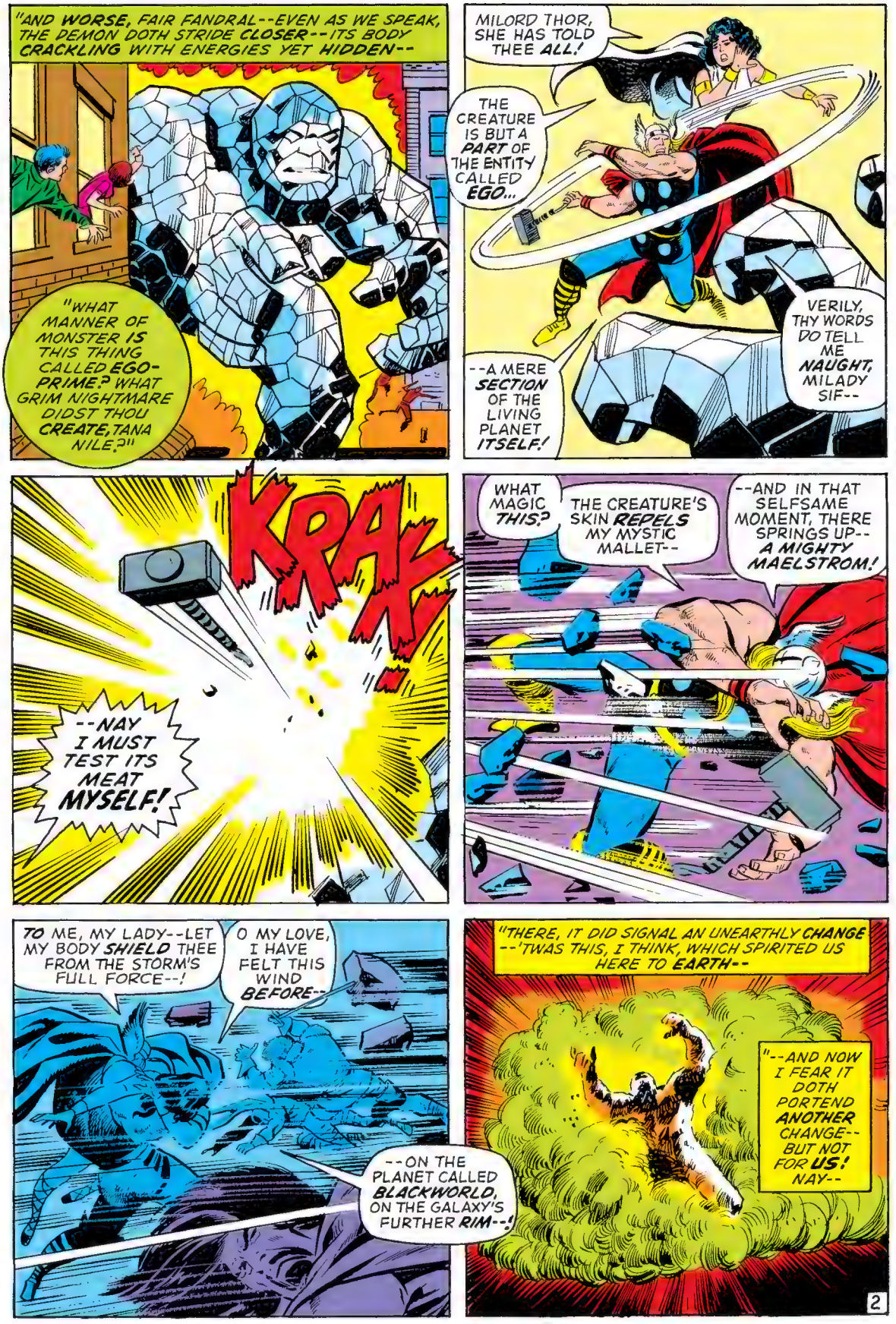
NAY--SPEAK FOR THYSELF, RIGELLIAN--
--HOGUN DOTH SMELL THE STENCH OF WAR!
--AS DOTH THE NOBLE NOSE OF VOLSTAGG! AND YET--
--AND YET, METHINKS THOU WOULDST RATHER NOT HEED ITS BITTER SCENT-- AYE, VAST ONE?
HOLD THY TONGUE, WOMAN!
LATER, I WOULD KNOW WHENCE YE HAVE COME--THOU, MY LADY SIF, AND THESE OTHERS --BUT NOW--!
BUT NOW, WE HAVE NO TIME, MILORD!
FOR, I HEAR THE THUNDER TREAD OF-- EGO-PRIME!!

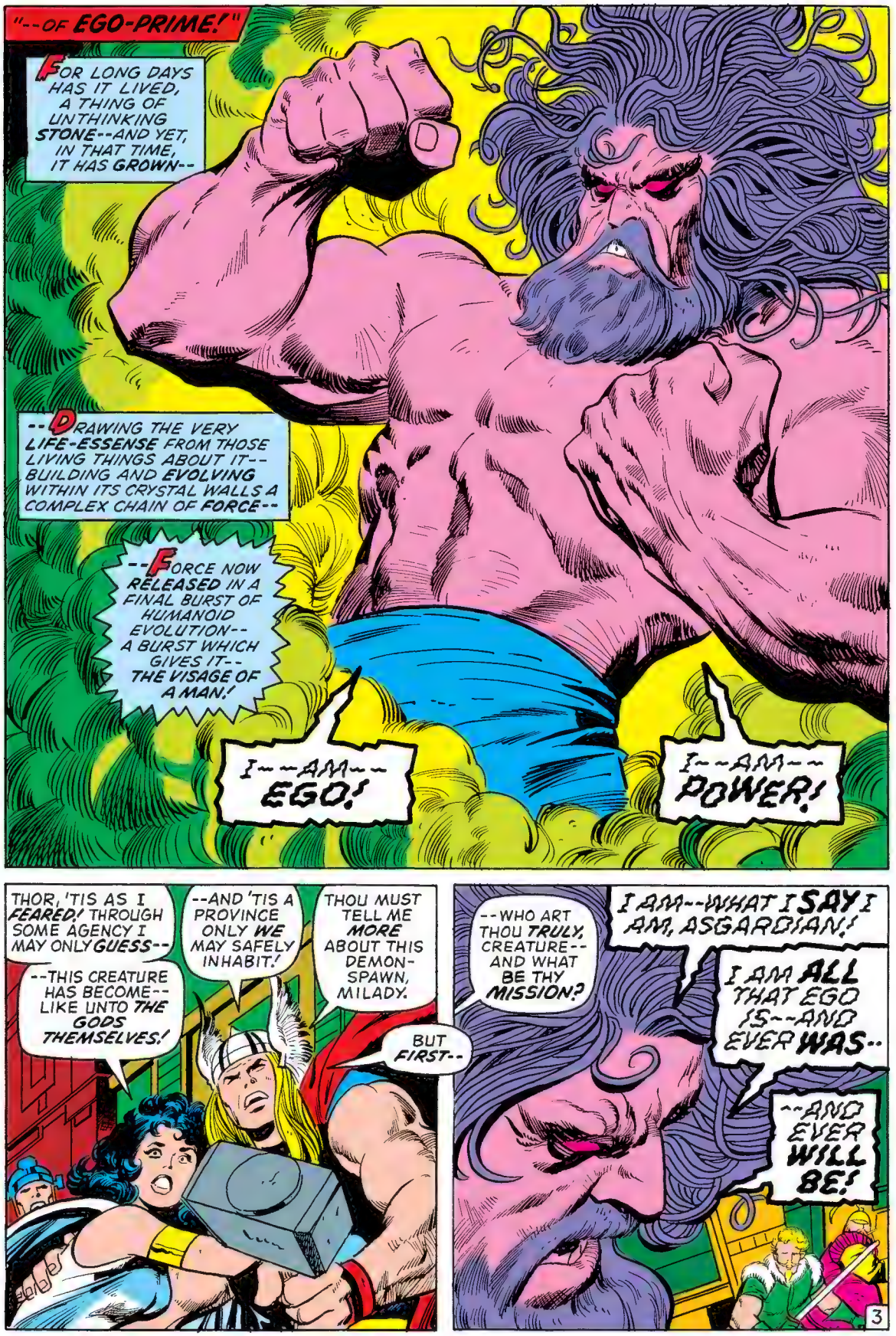
STAN LEE
PRESENTS:

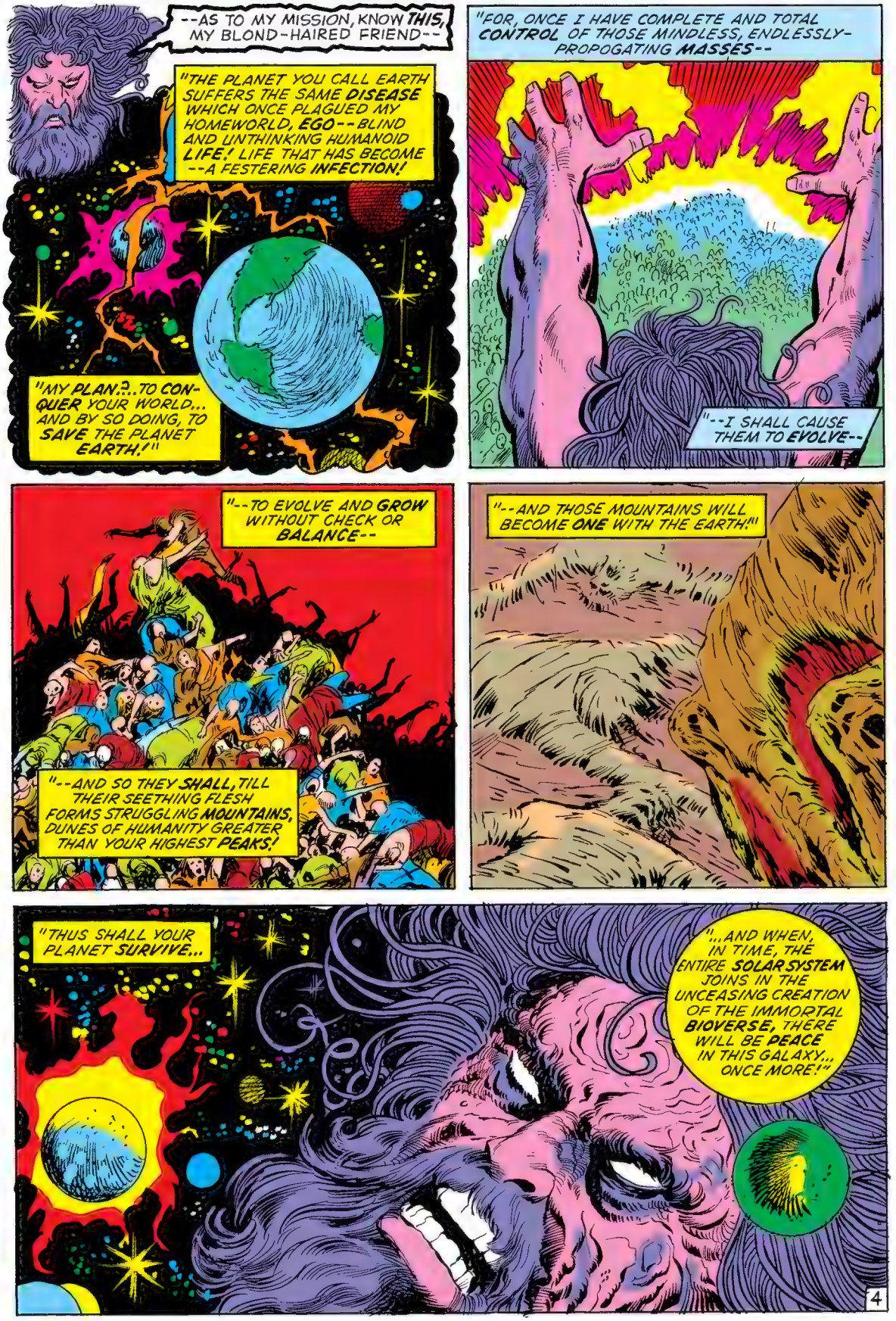
A
GERRY CONWAY
JOHN BUSCEMA
MINI-MARVEL
MASTERPIECE!

AIDED AND ABETTED BY:
VINNIE COLLETTA,
INKER,
AND
ARTIE SIMEK,
LETTERER

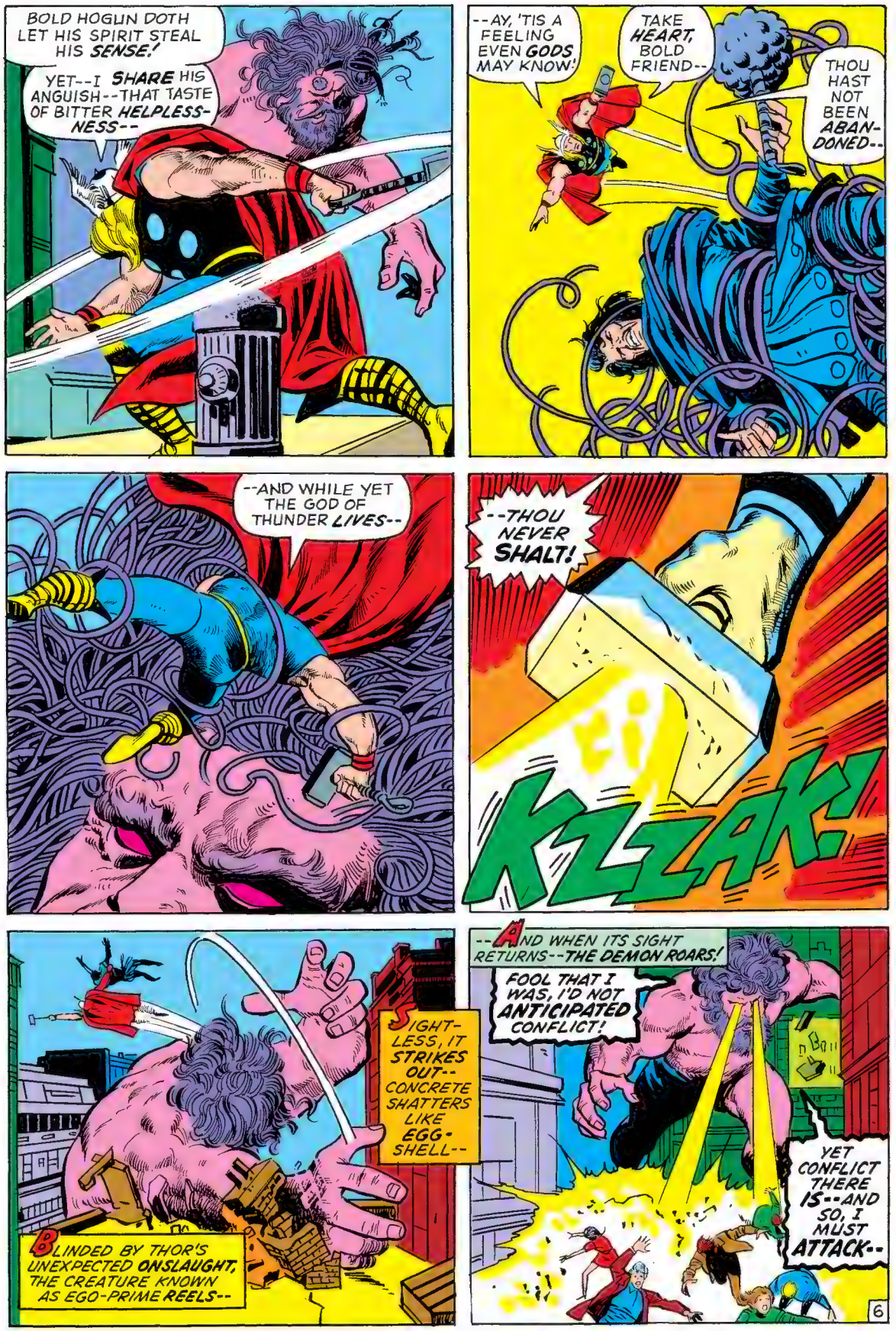
937

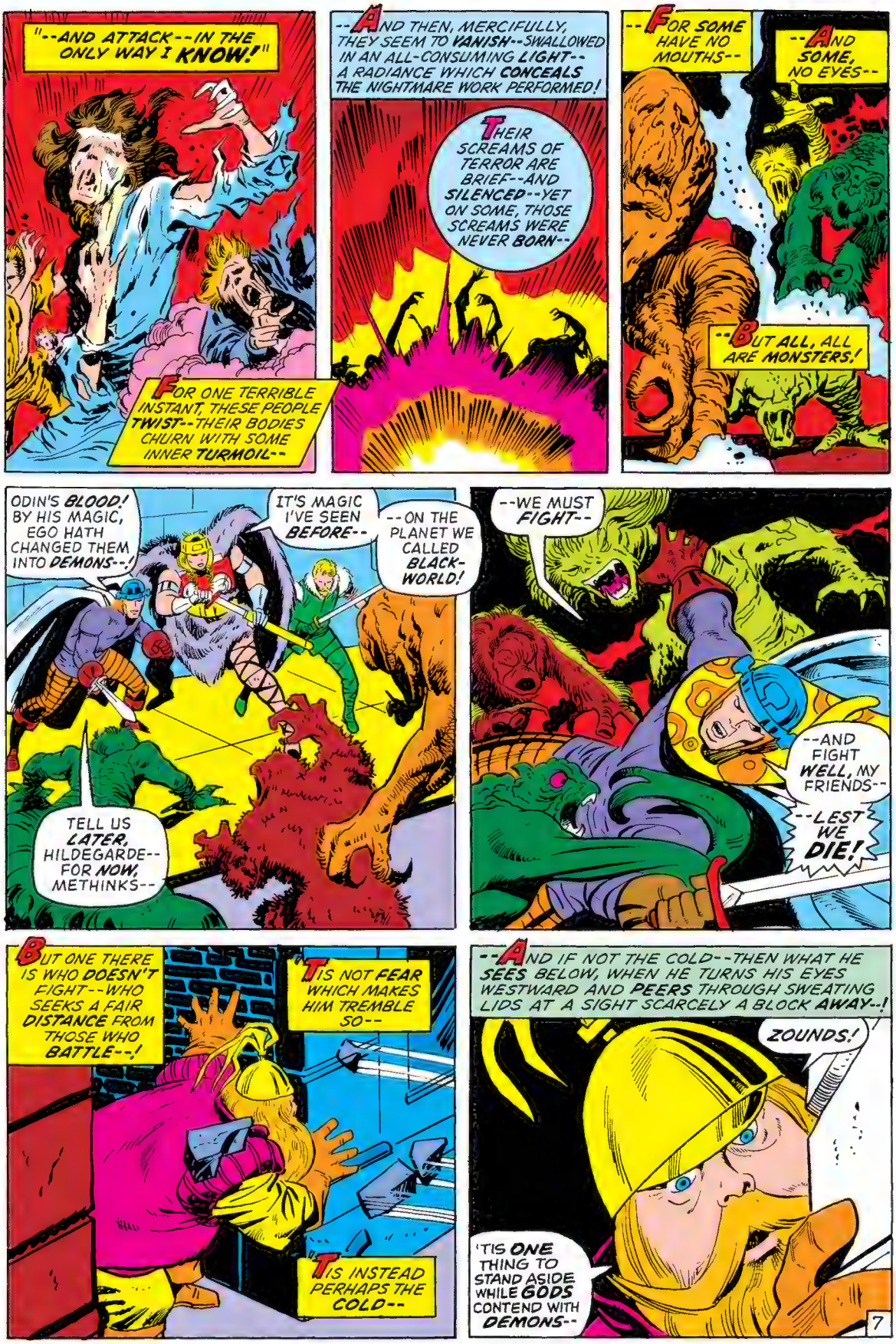

"AND WORSE, FAIR FANDRAL--EVEN AS WE SPEAK, THE DEMON DOTH STRIDE CLOSER--ITS BODY CRACKLING WITH ENERGIES YET HIDDEN--
"WHAT MANNER OF MONSTER IS THIS THING CALLED EGO-PRIME? WHAT GRIM NIGHTMARE DIDST THOU CREATE, TANA NILE?"
MILORD THOR, SHE HAS TOLD THEE ALL!
THE CREATURE IS BUT A PART OF THE ENTITY CALLED EGO...
--A MERE SECTION OF THE LIVING PLANET ITSELF!
VERILY, THY WORDS DO TELL ME NAUGHT, MILADY SIF--
KRAK
--NAY I MUST TEST ITS MEAT MYSELF!
WHAT MAGIC THIS?
THE CREATURE'S SKIN REPELS MY MYSTIC MALLET--
--AND IN THAT SELFSAME MOMENT, THERE SPRINGS UP-- A MIGHTY MAELSTROM!
TO ME, MY LADY--LET MY BODY SHIELD THEE FROM THE STORM'S FULL FORCE--!
O MY LOVE, I HAVE FELT THIS WIND BEFORE--
--ON THE PLANET CALLED BLACKWORLD, ON THE GALAXY'S FURTHER RIM--!
"THERE, IT DID SIGNAL AN UNEARTHLY CHANGE --'TWAS THIS, I THINK, WHICH SPIRITED US HERE TO EARTH--
"--AND NOW I FEAR IT DOTH PORTEND ANOTHER CHANGE-- BUT NOT FOR US! NAY--
2

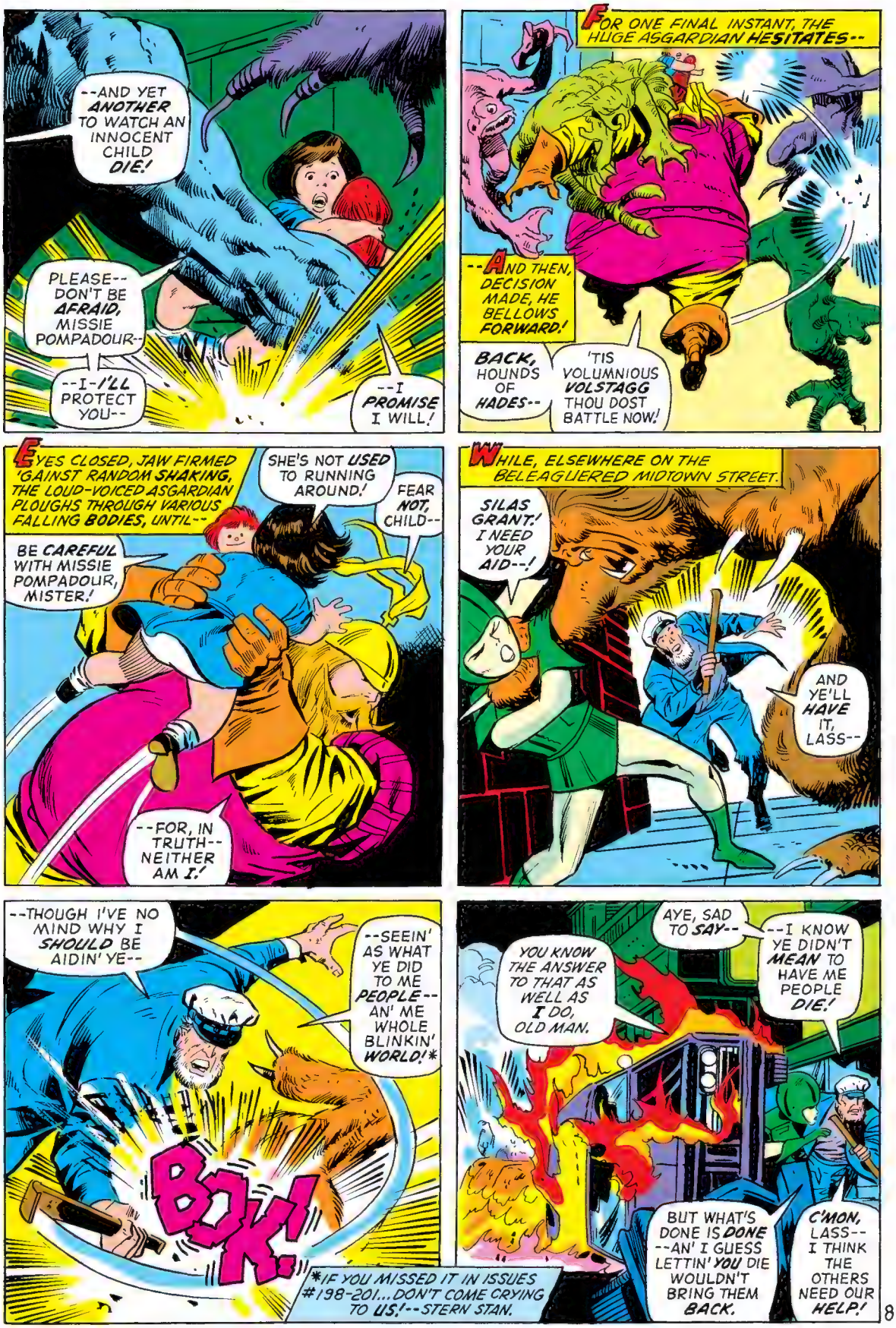

"--OF EGO-PRIME!"
FOR LONG DAYS HAS IT LIVED, A THING OF UNTHINKING STONE--AND YET, IN THAT TIME, IT HAS GROWN--
--DRAWING THE VERY LIFE-ESSENSE FROM THOSE LIVING THINGS ABOUT IT--BUILDING AND EVOLVING WITHIN ITS CRYSTAL WALLS A COMPLEX CHAIN OF FORCE--
--FORCE NOW RELEASED IN A FINAL BURST OF HUMANOID EVOLUTION--A BURST WHICH GIVES IT--THE VISAGE OF A MAN!
I--AM--EGO!
I--AM--POWER!
THOR, 'TIS AS I FEARED! THROUGH SOME AGENCY I MAY ONLY GUESS--
--THIS CREATURE HAS BECOME--LIKE UNTO THE GODS THEMSELVES!
--AND 'TIS A PROVINCE ONLY WE MAY SAFELY INHABIT!
THOU MUST TELL ME MORE ABOUT THIS DEMON-SPAWN, MILADY.
BUT FIRST--
--WHO ART THOU TRULY, CREATURE--AND WHAT BE THY MISSION?
I AM--WHAT I SAY I AM, ASGARDIAN!
I AM ALL THAT EGO IS--AND EVER WAS--
--AND EVER WILL BE!
3


--AS TO MY MISSION, KNOW THIS, MY BLOND-HAIRED FRIEND--
"THE PLANET YOU CALL EARTH SUFFERS THE SAME DISEASE WHICH ONCE PLAGUED MY HOMEWORLD, EGO--BLIND AND UNTHINKING HUMANOID LIFE! LIFE THAT HAS BECOME --A FESTERING INFECTION!
"MY PLAN?...TO CONQUER YOUR WORLD... AND BY SO DOING, TO SAVE THE PLANET EARTH!"
"FOR, ONCE I HAVE COMPLETE AND TOTAL CONTROL OF THOSE MINDLESS, ENDLESSLY-PROPOGATING MASSES--
"--I SHALL CAUSE THEM TO EVOLVE--
"--TO EVOLVE AND GROW WITHOUT CHECK OR BALANCE--
"--AND SO THEY SHALL, TILL THEIR SEETHING FLESH FORMS STRUGGLING MOUNTAINS, DUNES OF HUMANITY GREATER THAN YOUR HIGHEST PEAKS!
"--AND THOSE MOUNTAINS WILL BECOME ONE WITH THE EARTH!"
"THUS SHALL YOUR PLANET SURVIVE...
"...AND WHEN, IN TIME, THE ENTIRE SOLAR SYSTEM JOINS IN THE UNCEASING CREATION OF THE IMMORTAL BIOVERSE, THERE WILL BE PEACE IN THIS GALAXY... ONCE MORE!"

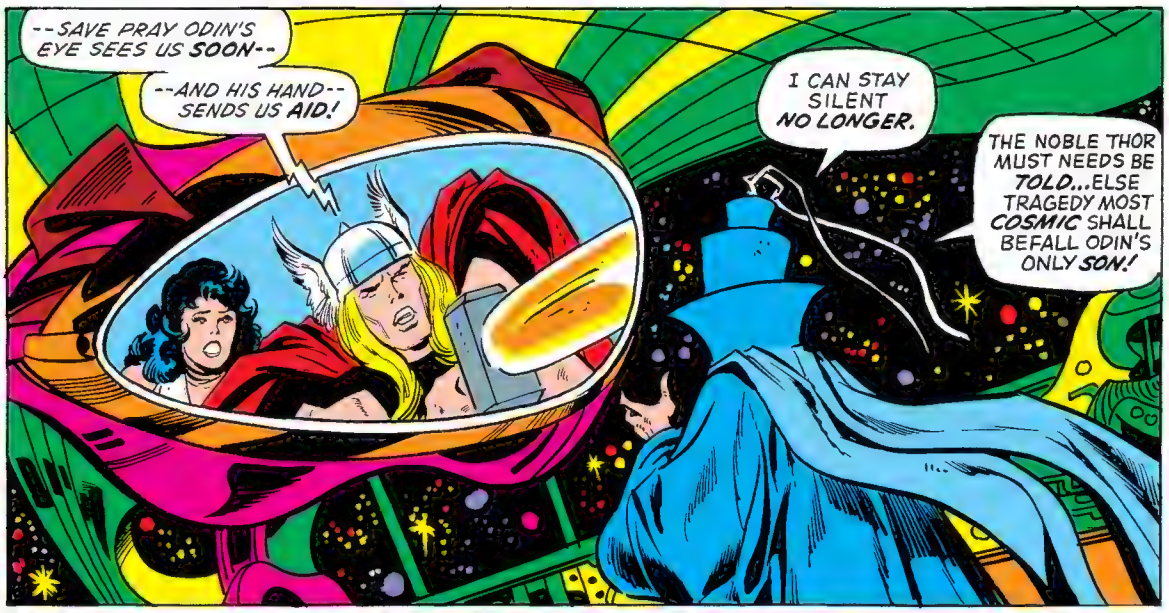
AND PRITHEE, WHAT OF US--WHILE THESE NOBLE PLANS SUMMARILY UNFOLD?
YEA--DO YOU THINK US MINDLESS PAWNS--?
--WITH NO SINGLE VOICE TO RAISE IN PROTEST?
NOT PAWNS--BUT THE MOST PITIABLE OF INSECTS!
YOUR VOICE MEANS NOTHING TO EGO-PRIME!
STARS! BOTH THOR AND BRAVE BALDER DO FALL BENEATH THE CREATURE'S ARCANE EYE-BLASTS....!
I LIKE IT NOT... BUT IT APPEARS I HAVE NO CHOICE...
GRIM HOGUN MUST MAKE THE FIRST ATTACK ALONE...
...AND PRAY ODIN MY HAND BE SWIFT!
LOOK THEE TO THE SKY, DEMON--
--'TIS THERE THY FATE AWAITS THEE!
WHAT? NO WORDS OF ANGER?
WHERE BE THY SENSE OF BATTLE, MONSTER? LET'S HEAR THEE CRY FOR WAR!
NO NEED, GODLING--
--FOR I'VE MORE ELOQUENT WAYS TO SPEAK!
IT TRAPS ME--AND HOLDS ME LIKE A VISE!
THE MONSTER'S HAIR--'TIS UNEARTHLY ALIVE!
BY THE GODDESS OF DEATH--"NO!"
5.


BOLD HOGUN DOTH LET HIS SPIRIT STEAL HIS SENSE!'
YET--I SHARE HIS ANGUISH--THAT TASTE OF BITTER HELPLESS-NESS--
--AY, 'TIS A FEELING EVEN GODS MAY KNOW!
TAKE HEART, BOLD FRIEND--
THOU HAST NOT BEEN ABAN-DONED--
--AND WHILE YET THE GOD OF THUNDER LIVES--
--THOU NEVER SHALT!
KZZAK!
SIGHT-LESS, IT STRIKES OUT--CONCRETE SHATTERS LIKE EGG-SHELL--
BLINDED BY THOR'S UNEXPECTED ONSLAUGHT, THE CREATURE KNOWN AS EGO-PRIME REELS--
--AND WHEN ITS SIGHT RETURNS--THE DEMON ROARS!
FOOL THAT I WAS, I'D NOT ANTICIPATED CONFLICT!
YET CONFLICT THERE IS--AND SO, I MUST ATTACK--
6


"--AND ATTACK--IN THE ONLY WAY I KNOW!"
FOR ONE TERRIBLE INSTANT, THESE PEOPLE TWIST--THEIR BODIES CHURN WITH SOME INNER TURMOIL--
--AND THEN, MERCIFULLY, THEY SEEM TO VANISH--SWALLOWED IN AN ALL-CONSUMING LIGHT--A RADIANCE WHICH CONCEALS THE NIGHTMARE WORK PERFORMED!
THEIR SCREAMS OF TERROR ARE BRIEF--AND SILENCED--YET ON SOME, THOSE SCREAMS WERE NEVER BORN--
--FOR SOME HAVE NO MOUTHS--
--AND SOME, NO EYES--
--BUT ALL, ALL ARE MONSTERS!
ODIN'S BLOOD! BY HIS MAGIC, EGO HATH CHANGED THEM INTO DEMONS--!
IT'S MAGIC I'VE SEEN BEFORE--
--ON THE PLANET WE CALLED BLACK-WORLD!
TELL US LATER, HILDEGARDE--FOR NOW, METHINKS--
--WE MUST FIGHT--
--AND FIGHT WELL, MY FRIENDS--
--LEST WE DIE!
BUT ONE THERE IS WHO DOESN'T FIGHT--WHO SEEKS A FAIR DISTANCE FROM THOSE WHO BATTLE--!
'TIS NOT FEAR WHICH MAKES HIM TREMBLE SO--
'TIS INSTEAD PERHAPS THE COLD--
--AND IF NOT THE COLD--THEN WHAT HE SEES BELOW, WHEN HE TURNS HIS EYES WESTWARD AND PEERS THROUGH SWEATING LIDS AT A SIGHT SCARCELY A BLOCK AWAY--!
ZOUNDS!
'TIS ONE THING TO STAND ASIDE WHILE GODS CONTEND WITH DEMONS--
7

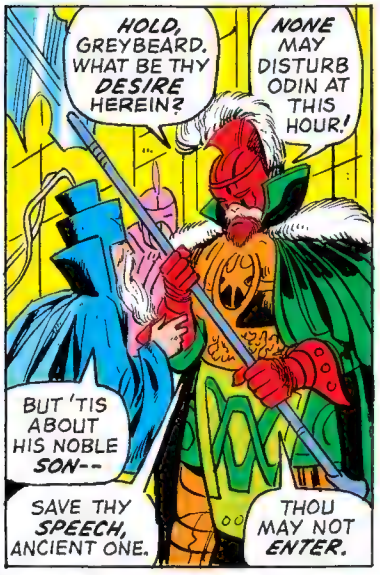

--AND YET ANOTHER TO WATCH AN INNOCENT CHILD DIE!
PLEASE-- DON'T BE AFRAID, MISSIE POMPADOUR--
--I-I'LL PROTECT YOU--
--I PROMISE I WILL!
FOR ONE FINAL INSTANT, THE HUGE ASGARDIAN HESITATES--
--AND THEN, DECISION MADE, HE BELLOWS FORWARD!
BACK, HOUNDS OF HADES--
'TIS VOLUMNIOUS VOLSTAGG THOU DOST BATTLE NOW!
EYES CLOSED, JAW FIRMED 'GAINST RANDOM SHAKING, THE LOUD-VOICED ASGARDIAN PLOUGHS THROUGH VARIOUS FALLING BODIES, UNTIL--
SHE'S NOT USED TO RUNNING AROUND!
FEAR NOT, CHILD--
BE CAREFUL WITH MISSIE POMPADOUR, MISTER!
--FOR, IN TRUTH-- NEITHER AM I!
WHILE, ELSEWHERE ON THE BELEAGUERED MIDTOWN STREET.
SILAS GRANT! I NEED YOUR AID--!
AND YE'LL HAVE IT, LASS--
--THOUGH I'VE NO MIND WHY I SHOULD BE AIDIN' YE--
--SEEIN' AS WHAT YE DID TO ME PEOPLE-- AN' ME WHOLE BLINKIN' WORLD!*
BOK!
*IF YOU MISSED IT IN ISSUES #198-201...DON'T COME CRYING TO US!--STERN STAN.
AYE, SAD TO SAY--
--I KNOW YE DIDN'T MEAN TO HAVE ME PEOPLE DIE!
YOU KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT AS WELL AS I DO, OLD MAN.
BUT WHAT'S DONE IS DONE --AN' I GUESS LETTIN' YOU DIE WOULDN'T BRING THEM BACK.
C'MON, LASS-- I THINK THE OTHERS NEED OUR HELP!

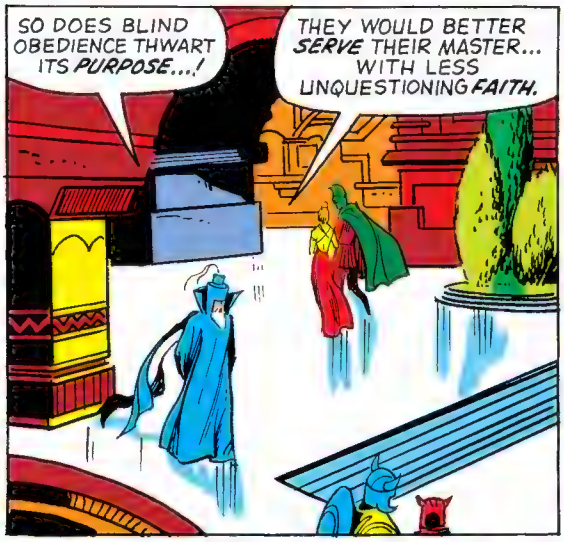
AND WHAT OF THOSE OTHERS? ONE, THE BRAVE BALDER, FIGHTS AGAINST UNSEEMLY ODDS JUST SHORT YARDS AWAY--
WAK!
UNABLE TO USE HIS SWORD BECAUSE OF THE TRUE NATURE OF THOSE WHO ATTACK HIM, BALDER IS BROUGHT SWIFTLY DOWN--
--BUT EVEN AS THE DARKNESS FALLS, HIS THOUGHTS RETURN TO ASGARD, AND THE WOMAN HE DARES NOT LOVE--!
--WHILE OTHER MEN THINK OF OTHER THINGS--
THERE RINGS THE TONE OF A HIDDEN PLAN IN ALL OF THIS--
--YET, TRY AS MY BRAIN MIGHT--
--I CAN NAUGHT CONCEIVE-- OF ODIN'S DESIGN!
DESIGN? IN CHAOS SUCH AS THIS--?
NAY, THE THOUGHT TURNS AWAY-- AND YET--
MY LOVE, THE CREATURE DOTH GROW LARGER--
--AS THOUGH, WITH EVERY BLAST OF THY HAMMER--
--HE DOTH FEED ON ITS MYSTIC ENERGY!
YET, STILL MUST WE BATTLE, MILADY SIF.
NAUGHT ELSE DARE WE DO--

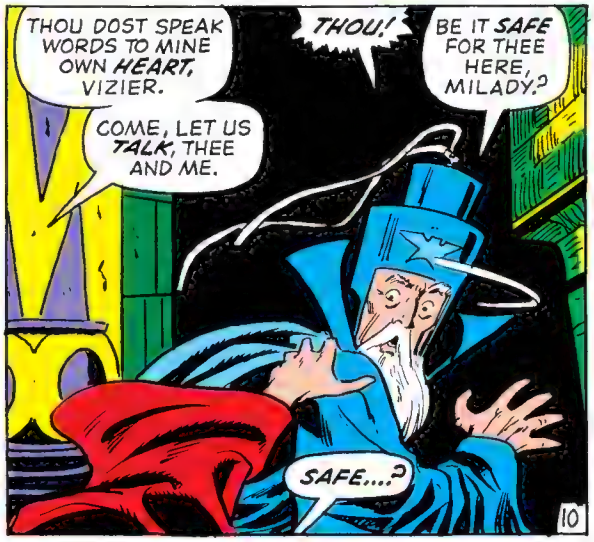

--SAVE PRAY ODIN'S EYE SEES US SOON--
--AND HIS HAND-- SENDS US AID!
I CAN STAY SILENT NO LONGER.
THE NOBLE THOR MUST NEEDS BE TOLD...ELSE TRAGEDY MOST COSMIC SHALL BEFALL ODIN'S ONLY SON!

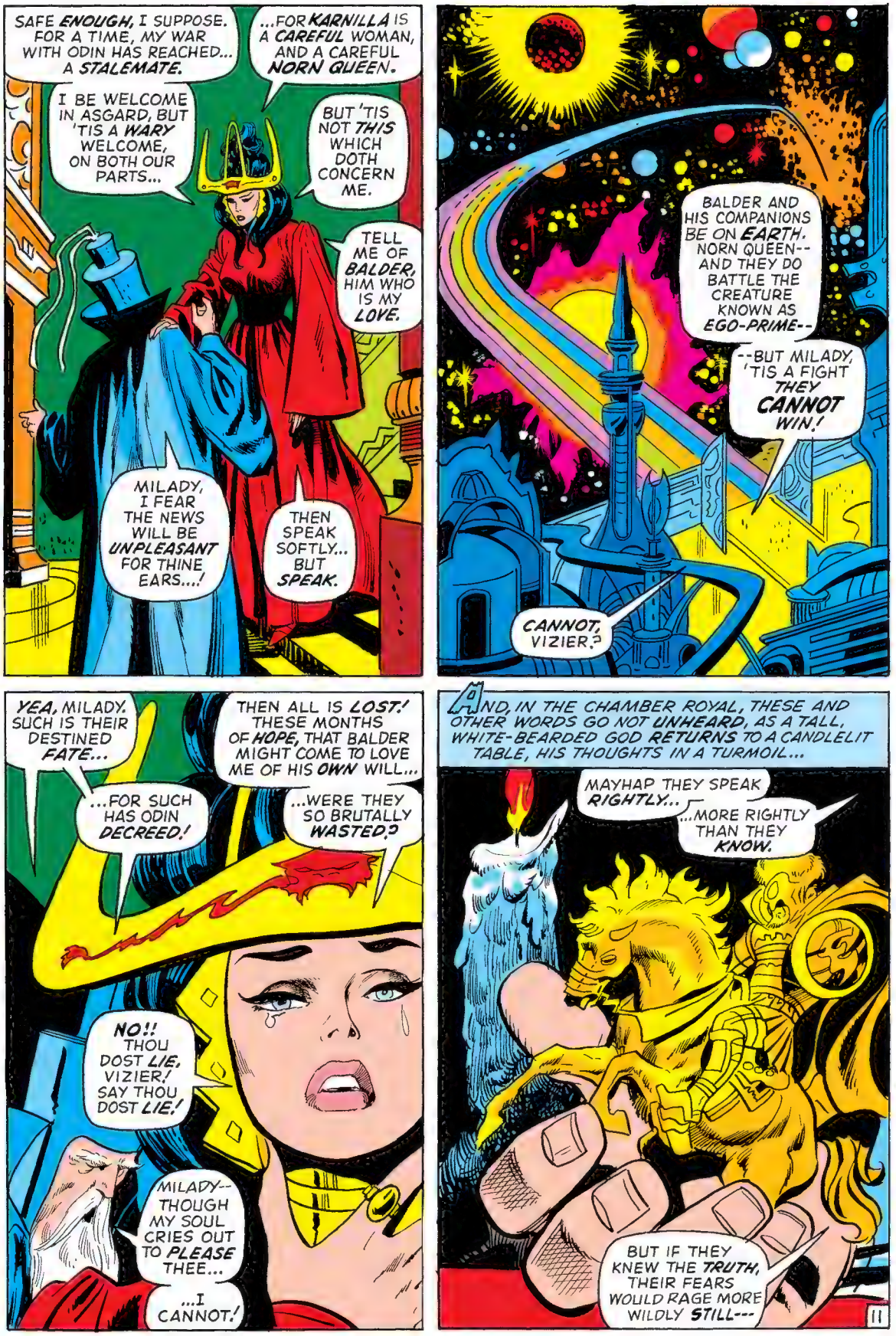
YET--DARE I, BUT A LOWLY VIZIER, DO WHAT ODIN COMMANDS BE LEFT UNDONE?

NAY...ELSE I BETRAY MY TRUST.
BUT...THERE MUST BE A WAY! PERHAPS IF I TURN TO THE ALL-FATHER HIMSELF?

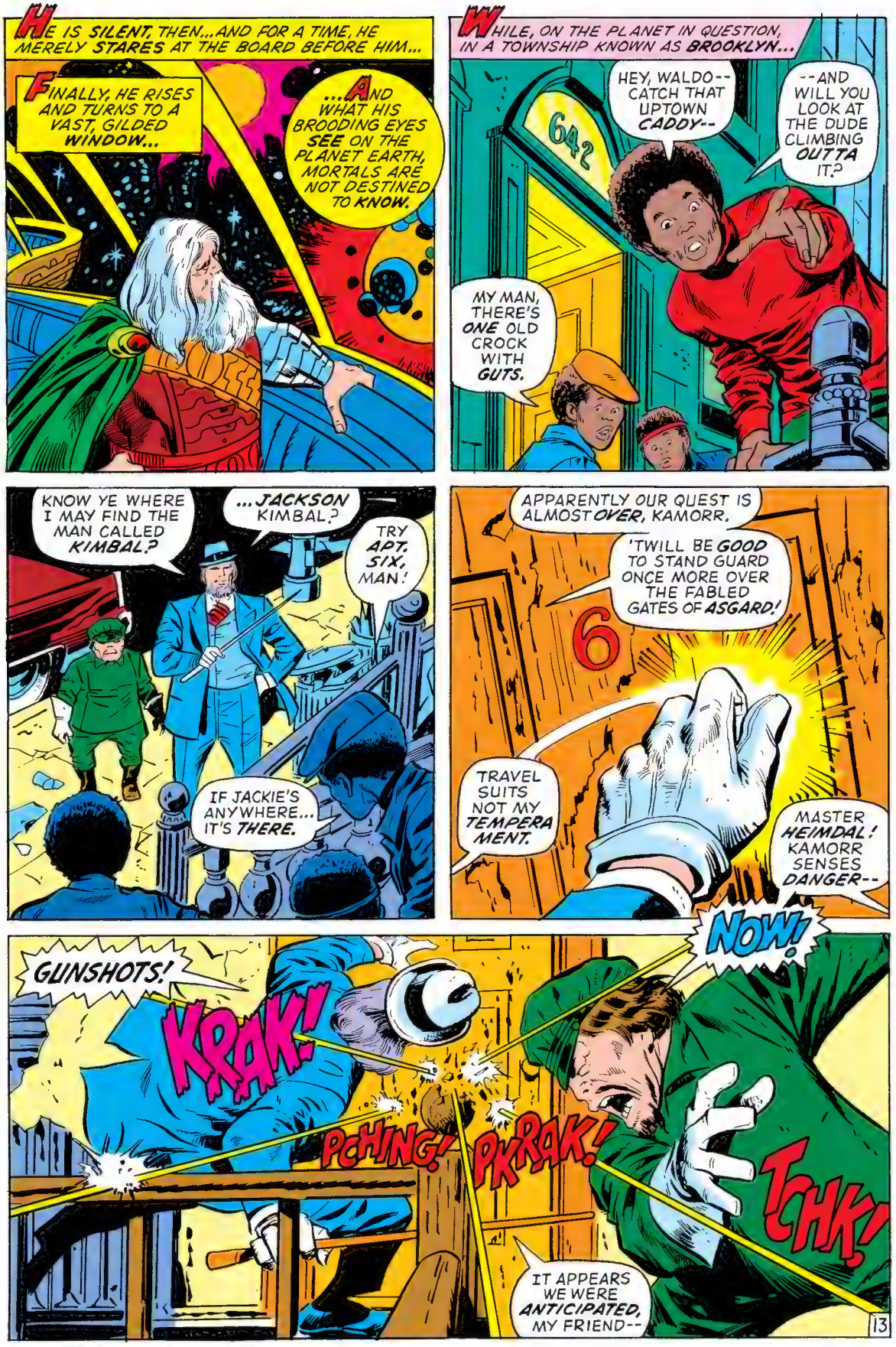

HOLD, GREYBEARD. WHAT BE THY DESIRE HEREIN?
NONE MAY DISTURB ODIN AT THIS HOUR!
BUT 'TIS ABOUT HIS NOBLE SON--
SAVE THY SPEECH, ANCIENT ONE.
THOU MAY NOT ENTER.


SO DOES BLIND OBEDIENCE THWART ITS PURPOSE...!
THEY WOULD BETTER SERVE THEIR MASTER... WITH LESS UNQUESTIONING FAITH.


THOU DOST SPEAK WORDS TO MINE OWN HEART, VIZIER.
COME, LET US TALK, THEE AND ME.
THOU!
BE IT SAFE FOR THEE HERE, MILADY?
SAFE...?


SAFE ENOUGH, I SUPPOSE. FOR A TIME, MY WAR WITH ODIN HAS REACHED... A STALEMATE.
...FOR KARNILLA IS A CAREFUL WOMAN, AND A CAREFUL NORN QUEEN.
I BE WELCOME IN ASGARD, BUT 'TIS A WARY WELCOME, ON BOTH OUR PARTS...
BUT 'TIS NOT THIS WHICH DOTH CONCERN ME.
TELL ME OF BALDER, HIM WHO IS MY LOVE.
MILADY, I FEAR THE NEWS WILL BE UNPLEASANT FOR THINE EARS...!
THEN SPEAK SOFTLY... BUT SPEAK.
BALDER AND HIS COMPANIONS BE ON EARTH. NORN QUEEN-- AND THEY DO BATTLE THE CREATURE KNOWN AS EGO-PRIME--
--BUT MILADY, 'TIS A FIGHT THEY CANNOT WIN!
CANNOT, VIZIER?
YEA, MILADY. SUCH IS THEIR DESTINED FATE...
THEN ALL IS LOST! THESE MONTHS OF HOPE, THAT BALDER MIGHT COME TO LOVE ME OF HIS OWN WILL...
...FOR SUCH HAS ODIN DECREED!
...WERE THEY SO BRUTALLY WASTED?
NO!! THOU DOST LIE, VIZIER! SAY THOU DOST LIE!
MILADY-- THOUGH MY SOUL CRIES OUT TO PLEASE THEE...
...I CANNOT!
AND, IN THE CHAMBER ROYAL, THESE AND OTHER WORDS GO NOT UNHEARD, AS A TALL, WHITE-BEARDED GOD RETURNS TO A CANDLELIT TABLE, HIS THOUGHTS IN A TURMOIL...
MAYHAP THEY SPEAK RIGHTLY...
...MORE RIGHTLY THAN THEY KNOW.
BUT IF THEY KNEW THE TRUTH, THEIR FEARS WOULD RAGE MORE WILDLY STILL---
11

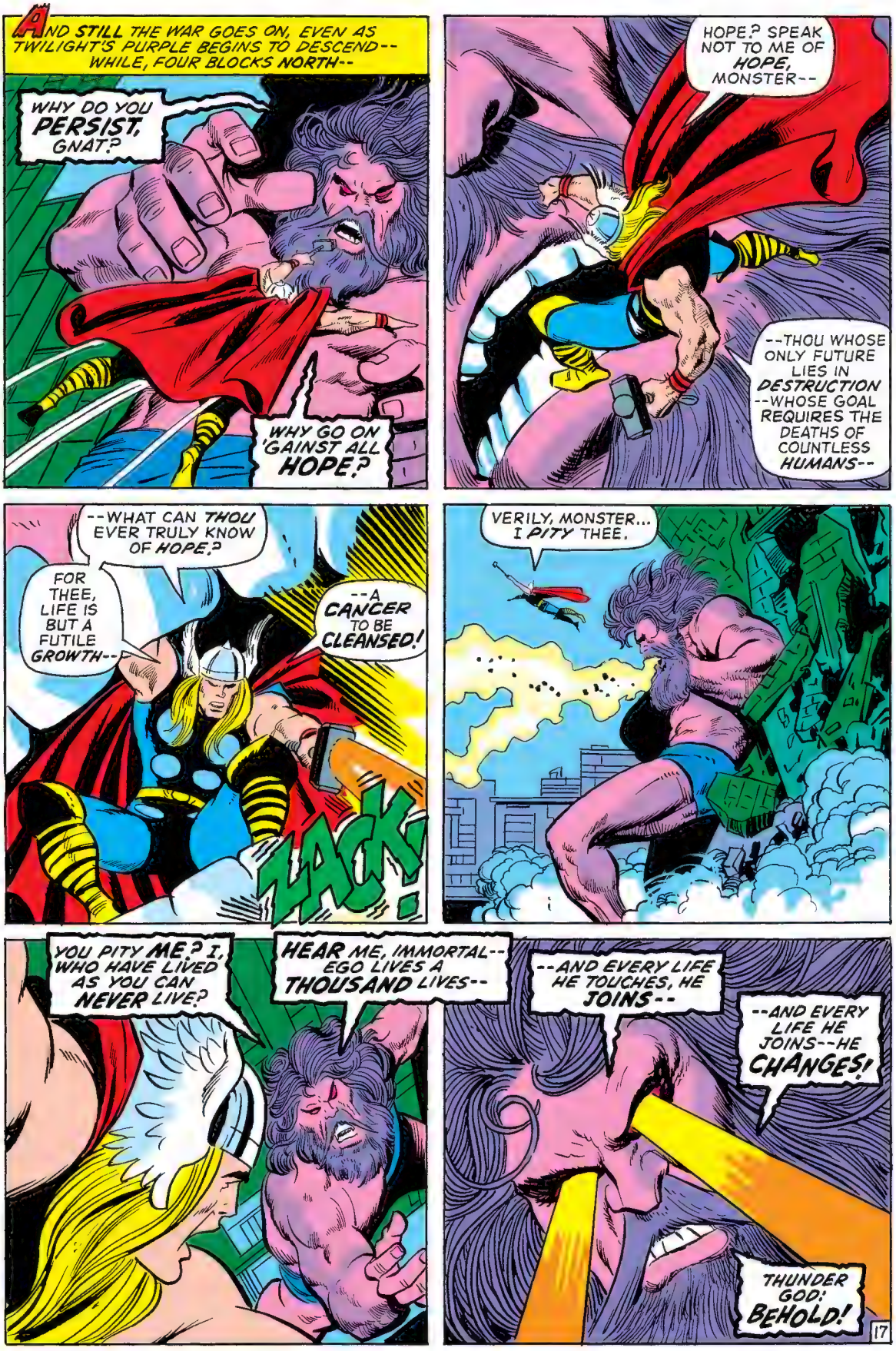
--FOR ODIN DOTH PLAY CHESS WITH THE LIVES OF GODS... AND MEN.


HE IS SILENT, THEN...AND FOR A TIME, HE MERELY STARES AT THE BOARD BEFORE HIM...
FINALLY, HE RISES AND TURNS TO A VAST, GILDED WINDOW...
...AND WHAT HIS BROODING EYES SEE ON THE PLANET EARTH, MORTALS ARE NOT DESTINED TO KNOW.
WHILE, ON THE PLANET IN QUESTION, IN A TOWNSHIP KNOWN AS BROOKLYN...
642
HEY, WALDO--CATCH THAT UPTOWN CADDY--
--AND WILL YOU LOOK AT THE DUDE CLIMBING OUTTA IT?
MY MAN, THERE'S ONE OLD CROCK WITH GUTS.
KNOW YE WHERE I MAY FIND THE MAN CALLED KIMBAL?
...JACKSON KIMBAL?
TRY APT. SIX, MAN!
IF JACKIE'S ANYWHERE... IT'S THERE.
APPARENTLY OUR QUEST IS ALMOST OVER, KAMORR.
'TWILL BE GOOD TO STAND GUARD ONCE MORE OVER THE FABLED GATES OF ASGARD!
6
TRAVEL SUITS NOT MY TEMPERA MENT.
MASTER HEIMDAL! KAMORR SENSES DANGER--
NOW!
GUNSHOTS!
KRAK!
PCHING!
PKRAK!
TCHK!
IT APPEARS WE WERE ANTICIPATED, MY FRIEND--

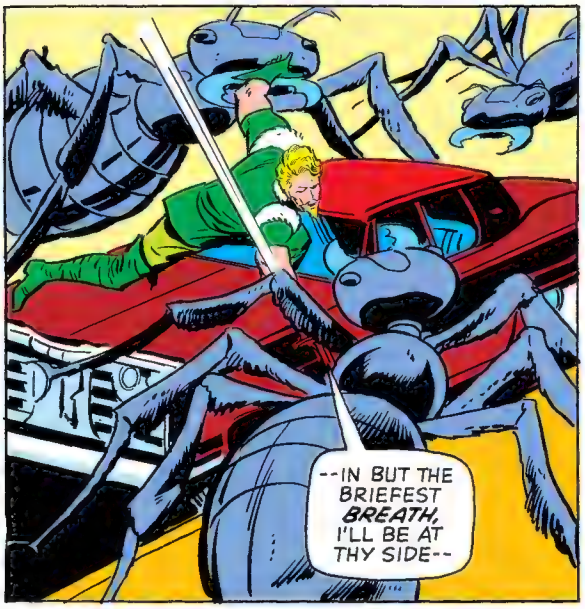
--BUT NOT EXPECTED!
BWHOMP!
SPEAK, YOUNG MAN--AND WHILST THOU DO, SET DOWN THY WEAPON--
AND PRITHEE, BE SWIFT.
G-GOOD LORD... YOU'RE...YOU'RE NOT BAKER....!
I COULD HAVE...
BAKER? THE NAME IS UNFAMILIAR TO ME.
WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?
I ALMOST KILLED YOU... WOULD'VE KILLED HIM!
LORD, WHAT DID I TRY TO DO?
CALM THYSELF, MAN.
APPARENTLY, THIS MAN BAKER IS A THREAT TO THEE--TRUE?
YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT, FRIEND.
I MADE A MISTAKE, ONCE--BORROWED MONEY FROM BAKER--NOW HE'S TRYING TO WASTE ME--!
AND BAKER WILL, JACKIE BOY.
...YOU AND THE OLD GEEZER, UNLESS HE KEEPS HIS TRAP SHUT.
GOT THE DOUGH, JACKIE? OR DO I HAVE TO SQUEEZE A LITTLE BIT?
THOU SHALT DO NEITHER, GUNSEL.
I NEED THIS MAN ON A HIGHER MATTER.
SO SPEAKS HEIMDAL, WARRIOR OF ASGARD!
14

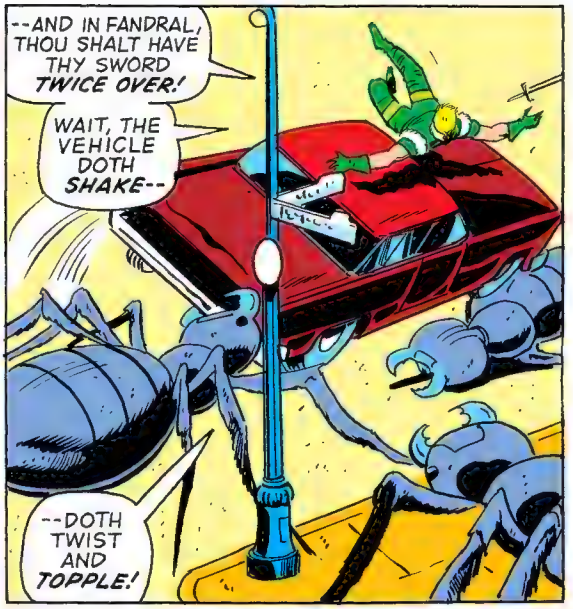
HEY, BENJY-- HOW'D HE DO THAT TO THE BOSS?
DUNNO. MUST'A HAD SOME SORTA ACETYLENE TORCH UP THAT CANE'A HIS--
--BUT THAT AINT GONNA KEEP ME FROM PLUGGIN' HIM ONE--!
HUH?
NAY, BLACKGUARD --THOU WILL NOT.
YEAH, RUNT? AND WHO'LL STOP ME?
SOME HALF-PINT SHAKESPEARE? I'LL BREAK YOUR--
ULP!
HEY, WHAT'RE YA DOIN'?
PUT ME DOWN! DON'T--
DON'T!
LEO--WALLY-- CATCH ME! CATCH ME!
KKKKRUMP!
15

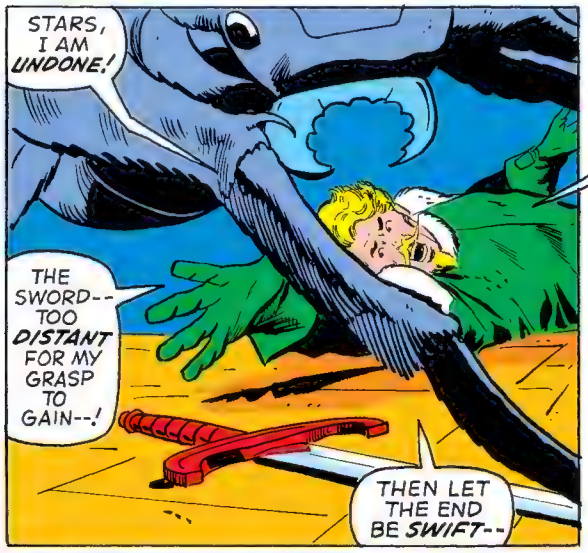
THEY ARE DONE, MASTER HEIMDAL.
CRIPES--DIDYA SEE WHAT THAT LITTLE GUY DID?
MY COMPANION IS A MAN OF... UNUSUAL QUALITIES.
WE SHALL NOT BE BOTHERED AGAIN.
HE-HE JUST-- TOOK HOLDA THEM-- AND--!
BUT COME. 'TIS TIME WE JOINED THE OTHERS.
OTHERS?
I ASSURE THEE, FRIEND KIMBAL... ALL THY QUESTIONS WILL BE ANSWERED, IN TIME.
FOR THE NOUNCE, TRUST ME...
...AND LET US ALL... BEGONE.
WHILE, ACROSS THE EAST RIVER, IN THE HEART OF MIDTOWN--
--THERE RAGES A BATTLE FOR A WORLD!
BALDER, MY BROTHER-- NEED THEE AID?
SPEAK, AND 'TIS THINE!
NAY, HOGUN-- STAY THY HAND, AND SAVE ITS STRENGTH FOR THYSELF!
WE'VE BATTLE ENOUGH, THE BOTH OF US--
--WITHOUT TWINING OUR FIGHTS IN TWO!

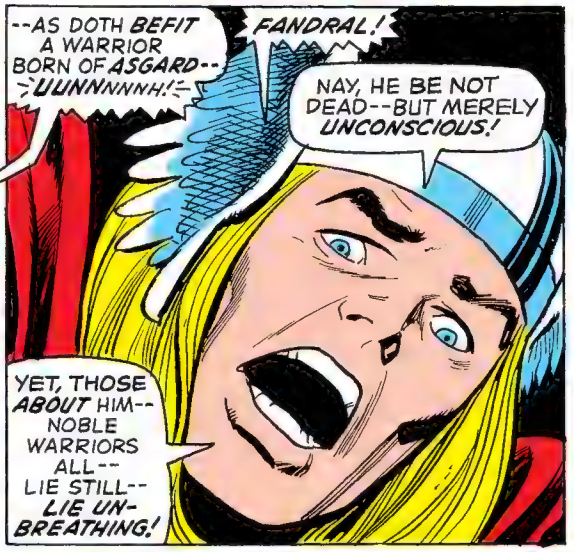

AND STILL THE WAR GOES ON, EVEN AS TWILIGHT'S PURPLE BEGINS TO DESCEND--
WHILE, FOUR BLOCKS NORTH--
WHY DO YOU PERSIST, GNAT?
WHY GO ON 'GAINST ALL HOPE?
HOPE? SPEAK NOT TO ME OF HOPE, MONSTER--
--THOU WHOSE ONLY FUTURE LIES IN DESTRUCTION --WHOSE GOAL REQUIRES THE DEATHS OF COUNTLESS HUMANS--
--WHAT CAN THOU EVER TRULY KNOW OF HOPE?
FOR THEE, LIFE IS BUT A FUTILE GROWTH--
--A CANCER TO BE CLEANSED!
ZACK!
VERILY, MONSTER... I PITY THEE.
YOU PITY ME? I, WHO HAVE LIVED AS YOU CAN NEVER LIVE?
HEAR ME, IMMORTAL-- EGO LIVES A THOUSAND LIVES--
--AND EVERY LIFE HE TOUCHES, HE JOINS--
--AND EVERY LIFE HE JOINS--HE CHANGES!
THUNDER GOD! BEHOLD!
17

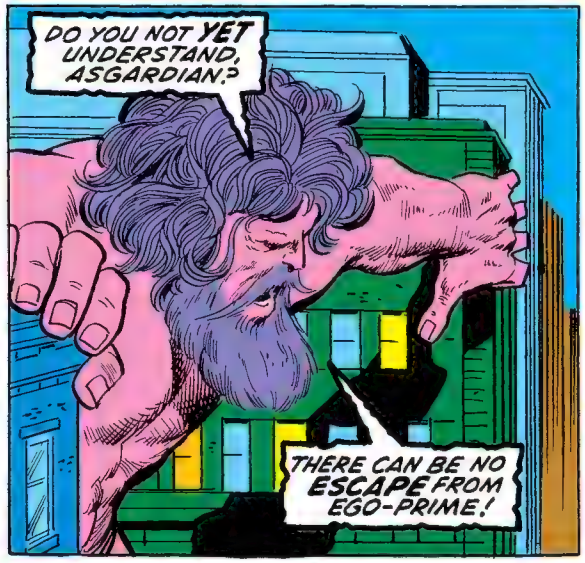
"THOSE LOWLY CREATURES YOU CALL ANTS--BENEATH YOUR NOTICE, BELOW YOUR VERY THOUGHTS--
"--AND YET, EGO SEES THEM--EGO KNOWS THEM--
"--AND THROUGH EGO--THEY ARE TRANSFORMED!
"THAT IS WHY EGO MUST PREVAIL--FOR HIS EYES SEEK OUT ALL THE FORMS OF LIFE--AND HE MAKES THOSE FORMS HIS OWN.
NOW, HOGUN--NOW WE'VE MEAT FOR OUR BLADES--
WE NEED FEAR HARMING NO HUMAN FLESH--NOT WITH THESE DEMONS!
YEA, AND OF US ALL--
--LET HOGUN BE THE FIRST TO STRIKE!
'TIS A SIMPLE BOON--
--BUT 'TIS ALREADY THINE!
HAVE AT THEE, MONSTERS!
--HILDEGARDE NEEDS NO WEAPONS.
HER STRENGTH BE ENOUGH ALONE!
FIGHT AS THOU WILT, WARRIORS--WITH THY MACE AND THY BLOODY BLADE--
THOUGH AT TIMES--I COULD DOTH USE A SWORD OR STAFF--
--AT TIMES LIKE THESE, METHINKS!
TAKE HEART, WOMAN--

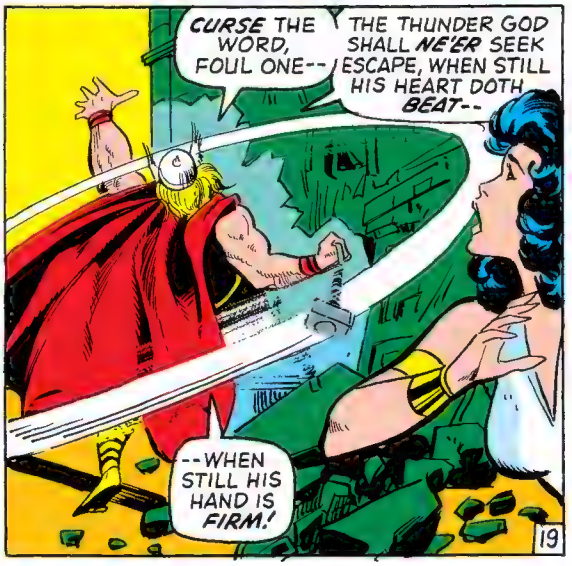

--IN BUT THE BRIEFEST BREATH, I'LL BE AT THY SIDE--


--AND IN FANDRAL, THOU SHALT HAVE THY SWORD TWICE OVER!
WAIT, THE VEHICLE DOTH SHAKE--
--DOTH TWIST AND TOPPLE!


STARS, I AM UNDONE!
THE SWORD--TOO DISTANT FOR MY GRASP TO GAIN--!
THEN LET THE END BE SWIFT--


--AS DOTH BEFIT A WARRIOR BORN OF ASGARD--
-UUNNNNNH!-
FANDRAL!
NAY, HE BE NOT DEAD--BUT MERELY UNCONSCIOUS!
YET, THOSE ABOUT HIM--NOBLE WARRIORS ALL--LIE STILL--LIE UN-BREATHING!


DO YOU NOT YET UNDERSTAND, ASGARDIAN?
THERE CAN BE NO ESCAPE FROM EGO-PRIME!


CURSE THE WORD, FOUL ONE--
THE THUNDER GOD SHALL NE'ER SEEK ESCAPE, WHEN STILL HIS HEART DOTH BEAT--
--WHEN STILL HIS HAND IS FIRM!

THEN I'LL UNFIRM YOUR HAND--
--AND I'LL STILL THE BEAT OF YOUR HEART--
--FOR MORE THAN MERE LIVING THINGS DO I CONTROL!
THE VERY EARTH IS MINE TO COMMAND!
--AND FOR SUCH AM I CALLED: EGO-PRIME!
BY ODIN'S SILVER BEARD-- THE VERY ROCKS OF EARTH DEVOUR ME--
HAVE I FOUGHT A BATTLE SO WRONG--
--THAT THE LAND ITSELF MOVES IN BLIND PROTEST?
BUT NO SOONER ARE THESE LAST WORDS DONE, THAN THE GOD OF THUNDER GROWS UNDULY SILENT--HIS CHEST HEAVES--HIS EYES CLOSE--
--AND HIS FINGERS SIGHTLESSLY CLAW--FOR AIR HE CAN NO LONGER BREATHE!
MILORD THOR-- NOOOOOOO!
NOOOOOO!
SO IT ENDS... AND IN THE PASSING OF ONE ERA...
...ANOTHER IS BORN ANEW!!
NEXT:
METAMORPHOSIS!

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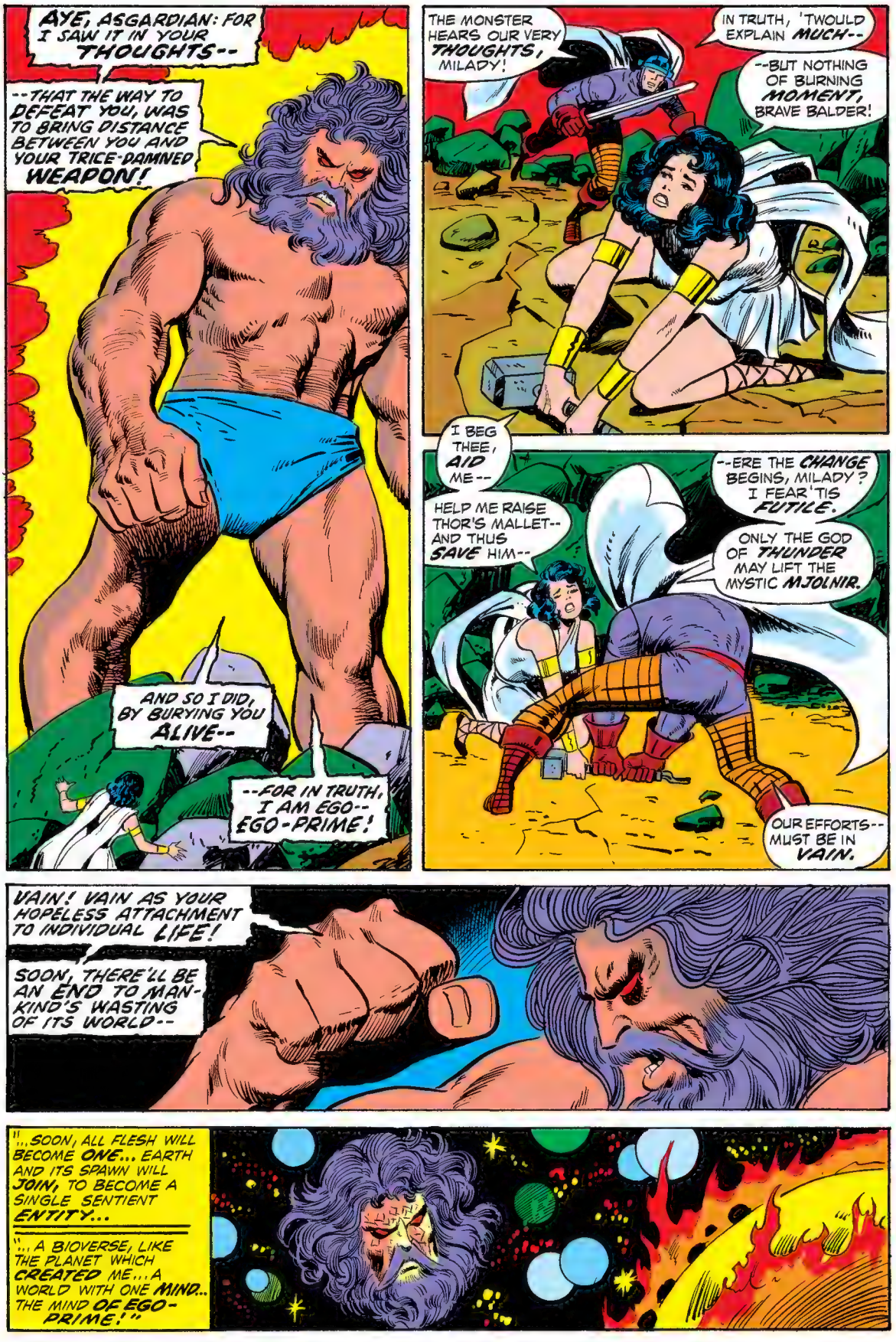
THE MIGHTY
THOR
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THEY WALK LIKE GODS!

THE MIGHTY THOR!™

THEY WALK LIKE GODS!
MY LORD, THOU MUST RISE--THOU MUST!
AS WE SPEAK, EGO-PRIME DOTH INCREASE HIS POWER AND AWESOME STRENGTH--
--TILL NOT E'EN THE HAND OF NOBLE THOR MAY STRIVE TO VICTORY AGAINST HIM!
WOMAN, I HEAR THY WORDS--YET I CAN DO NAUGHT TO SERVE THEM!
CONSCIOUSNESS BEGINS TO LEAVE ME--BUT TRY AS I MIGHT, I CANNOT BRING MY HAMMER TO MY HAND!
MILADY SIF, GET THEE BACK--FOR WITHIN THE MINUTE--
--THOR WILL BE NO MORE!
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
GERRY CONWAY, SCRIPTER
JOHN BUSCEMA, ARTIST
VINCE COLLETTA inker
JOHN COSTANZA letterer
ROY THOMAS EDITOR


AYE, ASGARDIAN: FOR I SAW IT IN YOUR THOUGHTS--
--THAT THE WAY TO DEFEAT YOU, WAS TO BRING DISTANCE BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR TRICE-DAMNED WEAPON!
AND SO I DID, BY BURYING YOU ALIVE--
--FOR IN TRUTH, I AM EGO-- EGO-PRIME!
THE MONSTER HEARS OUR VERY THOUGHTS, MILADY!
IN TRUTH, 'TWOULD EXPLAIN MUCH--
--BUT NOTHING OF BURNING MOMENT, BRAVE BALDER!
I BEG THEE, AID ME--
HELP ME RAISE THOR'S MALLET-- AND THUS SAVE HIM--
--ERE THE CHANGE BEGINS, MILADY? I FEAR 'TIS FUTILE.
ONLY THE GOD OF THUNDER MAY LIFT THE MYSTIC MJOLNIR.
OUR EFFORTS-- MUST BE IN VAIN.
VAIN! VAIN AS YOUR HOPELESS ATTACHMENT TO INDIVIDUAL LIFE!
SOON, THERE'LL BE AN END TO MANKIND'S WASTING OF ITS WORLD--
"...SOON, ALL FLESH WILL BECOME ONE... EARTH AND ITS SPAWN WILL JOIN, TO BECOME A SINGLE SENTIENT ENTITY...
"...A BIOVERSE, LIKE THE PLANET WHICH CREATED ME...A WORLD WITH ONE MIND... THE MIND OF EGO-PRIME!"

NAY, DEMON-- NAY!
'TIS A SCHEME UNNATURAL-- A PLAN AGAINST THE VERY DREAM WHICH MAKES THESE MORTALS MEN!
BE THOU SO FOOLISH AS TO THINK THE GODS WOULD LET IT BE?
AND WHO WILL STOP ME, ASGARDIAN?
YOU--OR THAT FRIGHTENED GIRL?
MAYHAP YOUR FRIENDS WILL-- THE ONE CALLED FANDRAL--THE OTHER, HOGUN--
--OR EVEN THE GODDESS HILDEGARDE?
SHALL THEY STAY MY HAND?
--OR WILL YOUR PRECIOUS EARTH-MEN FIGHT ME?
WILL THOSE I'VE TURNED INTO MONSTERS...BETRAY I'VE SPAWNED...BETRAY THEIR CREATOR?
NO, ASGARDIAN... I THINK NOT.
EARTH WILL DIE, THIS DAY... FOR, EVEN NOW, ITS TOWERS CRUMBLE...
...AND ITS GLORIOUS CITY... BURNS!
ONCY THE GOD CALLED THOR THREATENED ME...
...AND HE, AS YOU SEE, IS A THREAT NO MORE!
NOT SO, DEMON! THINE ARROGANCE IS THY GREATEST ENEMY--
--FOR WHILE THOU HAST SPOKEN, THE SECONDS HAVE FLED--

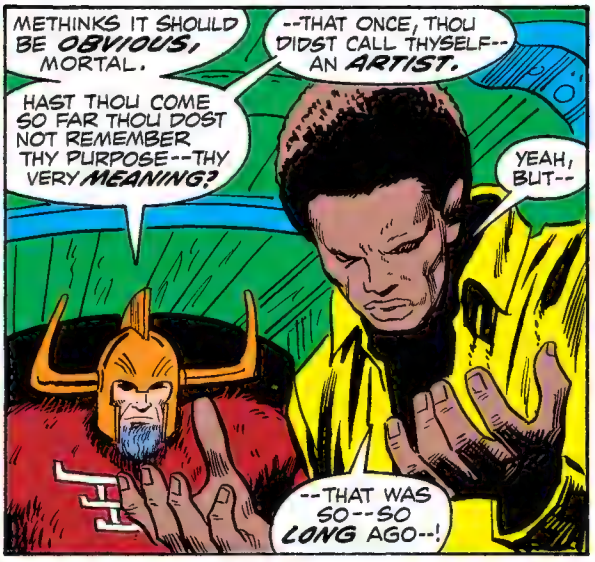
--THE INSTANT HATH COME--
--FOR THE END-- OF THOR!
BA-KOOM!
ENERGY SWELLS-- AND IN THE MOMENT FROM ONE SECOND TO THE NEXT, AN UNCANNY TRANSFORMATION OCCURS --A METAMORPHOSIS ALMOST UN-REMEMBERED, THAT CHANGES THE MIGHTY SON OF ODIN--
--INTO THE LAME MORTAL DOCTOR CALLED DON BLAKE!
THE POWER RELEASED DURING THE CHANGE--
--IT--IT SHATTERED THE ROCKS-- FREED ME!
BUT THAT WON'T MEAN A THING-- UNLESS I REACH MY CANE--
--GRAB IT BEFORE EGO REALIZES WHAT'S HAPPENED--
--BEFORE HE LOOKS AROUND AND SEES THOR'S HAMMER MISSING--
--AND SPIES AN ALL-TOO-HUMAN BLOND-HAIRED PHYSICIAN--!
EACH TIME I DO THIS, I FIND MYSELF PRAYING--
--AND PRAYER'S A PRETTY FUNNY THING--
--FOR THE GOD OF THUNDER!
FOR A LONG MOMENT, THE TABLEAU REMAINS FIXED-- AND THEN, ONE FIGURE MOVES TO EMBRACE ANOTHER--!
'TIS A BRIEF EMBRACE AT BEST-- FOR, NOW--

--THE FIGHT GOES ON!
FOR ODIN! FOR ASGARD!
FOR EARTH!
A PAUSE... TIME FOR A SHIFTING OF SCENES, A RELOCATION OF CONCERNS...
BACK! TO A DAY NINETY-SIX HOURS AGO... AND A SPEEDING SEDAN THAT CHURNS THE LITTER OF A TWILIT BROOKLYN STREET...
...A CAR WITH SOME MOST UNUSUAL OCCUPANTS...
HEY, LOOK--MAYBE YOU SAVED MY LIFE BACK IN THAT TENEMENT--
--AND MAYBE YOU DIDN'T--
MORTAL, MASTER HEIMDAL SHALL SPEAK WHEN HE DOTH PLEASE--
--BUT DON'T YOU FIGURE YOU OWE ME AN EXPLANATION, OR SOMETHING?
LIKE TELLING ME WHERE WE'RE HEADED, FOR STARTS?
--AND NOT, I FEAR, ONE INSTANT BEFORE!
YEAH, A FAT LOT'A GOOD THAT DOES ME, SHORTIE.
WHAT IS THIS, ANYWAY? A BLASTED PLEASURE-CRUISE?

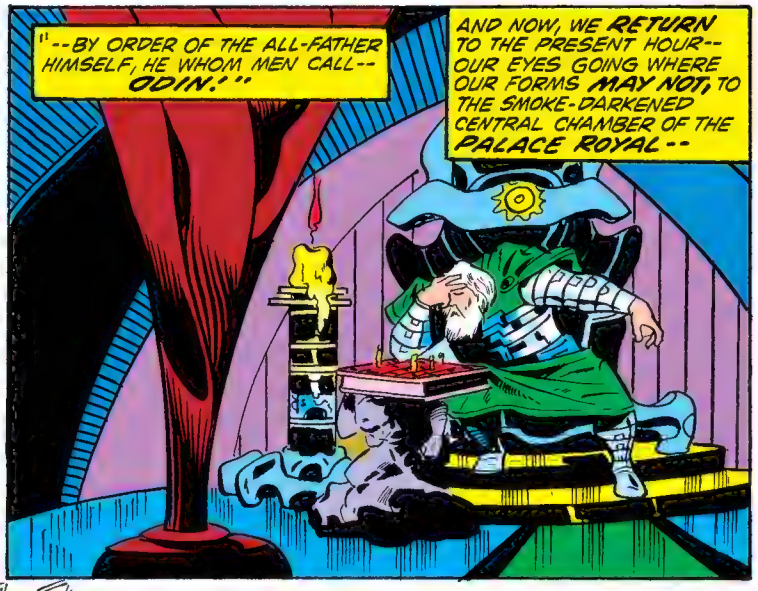
MISTER KIMBAL, I DO ASSURE THEE--
--THIS IS, IN TRUTH, NO RICH MAN'S YACHT--AND OUR PURPOSE, NO MATTER OF FRIVOLITY.
--THIS SHALL BE NO "PLEASURE-CRUISE"! FOR, AS THOU NO DOUBT DOTH SEE--
MY EYES--SOMETHING KNIFING INSIDE THEM--!
OH SWEET LORD!
CALM THYSELF, MISTER KIMBAL.
'TIS TWICE NOW I'VE HAD TO ADMONISH THEE, AND I'LL NOT--EH?
TALK, MY FRIEND--AND QUICKLY, OR THE SMALL ONE DIES.
FIRST, WHO ARE YOU--AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH--?
--HEIMDAL! FRIEND, WE'D NOT RECOGNIZED YOU--
YEA, THESE GARMENTS ARE DISTASTEFUL--
--BUT MORE THAN NECESSARY, IN A CULTURE SO SUSPICIOUS AS THIS.
I HAVE BROUGHT THE THIRD--AND LAST--OF OUR SELECT GROUP--
PUT DOWN THY WEAPON, CARTER DYAM. THE TIME FOR VIOLENCE IS PAST.
--THE MAN CALLED JASON KIMBAL.
MAYBE YOU PEOPLE KNOW WHAT THIS GAME'S ALL ABOUT--
--BUT ME, I'M LOST.
BIG MAN SAVED ME FROM A TEAM OF GUN-HAPPY COAN-SHARKS--
--WHAT'D HE DO FOR YOU?
PERHAPS I MAY BETTER ANSWER FOR THIS GIRL, CHI LO.
HER FACILITY WITH ENGLISH IS, AT BEST, ONLY PARTIAL... AND AT THAT, MIRACU-LOUS...
"...FOR OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN HER SEA-COAST VILLAGE, ONLY CHI LO HAS BEEN TO THE MAINLAND UNIVERSITY IN TOKYO... BUT, LIKE OTHERS, FROM OTHER SMALL TOWNS, SHE DID ABANDON HER STUDIES...
"...TO RETURN TO THE LIFE SHE DID KNOW... AND LOVE.

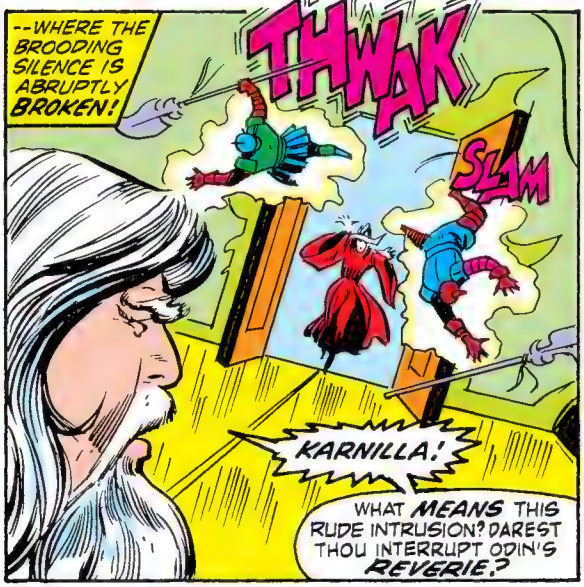
"THERE SHE WOULD HAVE STAYED, HAD NOT I FOUND HER... AND OFFERED HER AN EVEN MORE FULFILLING LIFE...
"...ONE THAT WILL COMBINE THE JOYS OF WORKING WITH THE EARTH...
"...AS WELL AS TOILING BENEATH THE WAVES.
AS FOR CARTER DYAM, A MAN OF HIDDEN SENSITIVITY...
PERHAPS HE SHOULD RELATE THE TALE OF OUR MEETING...
"WHAT DO I SAY, JASON KIMBAL?" SNARLS THE GRIM-FACED ISRAELI. "DO I SPEAK OF WAR, AND OF THE FIGHTING FOR THE LAND OF MY PEOPLE--OF STRUGGLING TILL I FORGOT THE PURPOSE OF IT ALL--?
...FOR ONLY HE CAN KNOW ITS FULLEST MEANING.
"--OR DO I SPEAK OF WEARINESS, AND THE SICKNESS IN MY HEART--
"--AN ILLNESS BORN OF THE FEAR THAT THE ONLY PURPOSE--ULTIMATELY--WAS DEATH."
"SHOULD I SPEAK OF THIS--OR ANOTHER THING?
"SHOULD I MENTION THE FEAR--OR THE HAND REACHING OUT OF THE DARKNESS? TELL ME WHICH.
"...PERHAPS THEN I'LL KNOW WHY ONE LOOK INTO HEIMDAL'S EYES CHANGED MY LIFE...
"PERHAPS THEN I'LL UNDERSTAND BOTH HIM...AND MYSELF."

YEAH, MAN, THAT'S REALLY NEAT.
YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A FARMER AND A FIGHTER--
--SO WHAT IN HECK DO YOU WANT WITH ME?


METHINKS IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS, MORTAL.
--THAT ONCE, THOU DIDST CALL THYSELF-- AN ARTIST.
HAST THOU COME SO FAR THOU DOST NOT REMEMBER THY PURPOSE--THY VERY MEANING?
YEAH, BUT--
--THAT WAS SO--SO LONG AGO--!

JASON KIMBAL, I SAY THEE NAY.
THY TALENT DOTH REMAIN WITH THEE--AND FOR THAT REASON, THOU WERT SOUGHT--

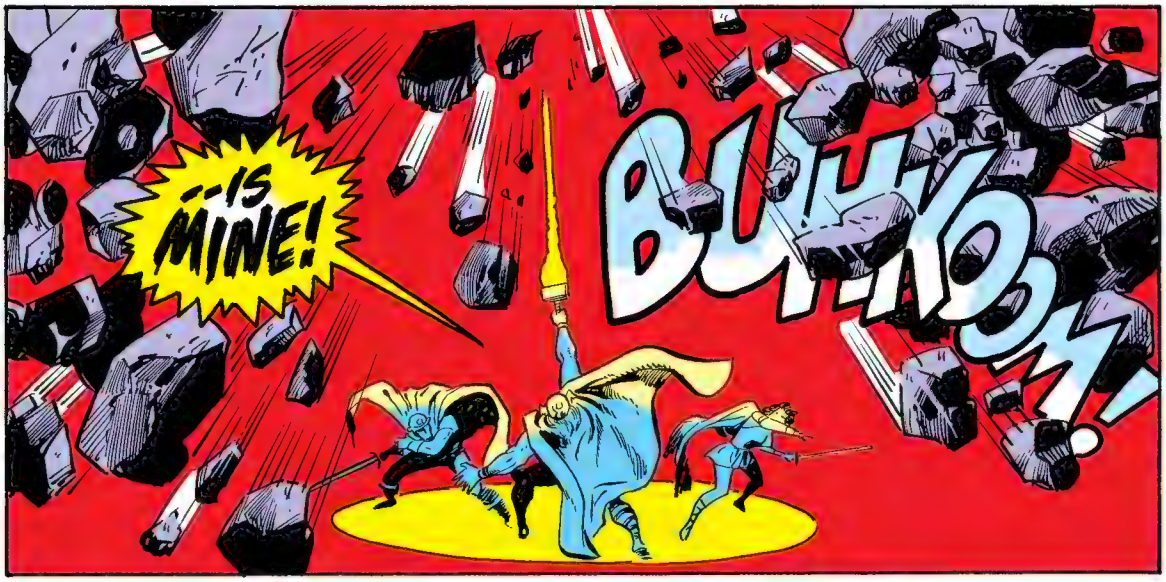

"--BY ORDER OF THE ALL-FATHER HIMSELF, HE WHOM MEN CALL-- ODIN!""
AND NOW, WE RETURN TO THE PRESENT HOUR-- OUR EYES GOING WHERE OUR FORMS MAY NOT, TO THE SMOKE-DARKENED CENTRAL CHAMBER OF THE PALACE ROYAL--

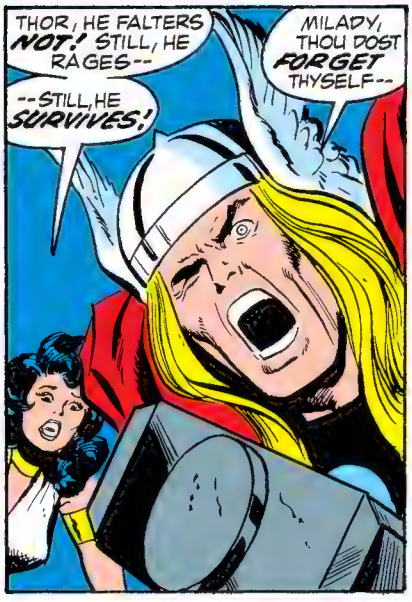

--WHERE THE BROODING SILENCE IS ABRUPTLY BROKEN!
THWAK
SLAM
KARNILLA!
WHAT MEANS THIS RUDE INTRUSION? DAREST THOU INTERRUPT ODIN'S REVERIE?

AYE, THAT I'LL DARE--AND MORE--
-- AND DARE THRICE OVER TILL THOU TELL ME WHAT THOU HAST DONE WITH BALDER!
CRAK

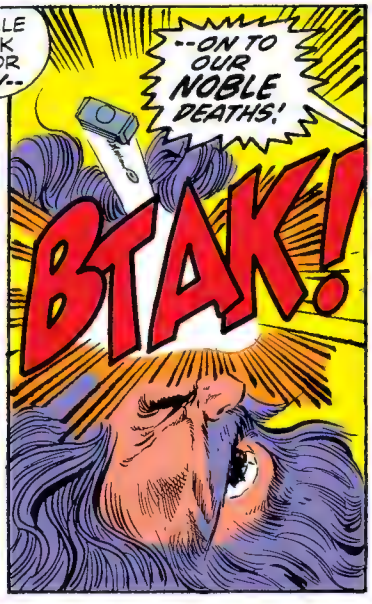
MILORD, I BEG THY FORGIVENESS.
I FEAR I DID SPEAK TOO OPENLY--FOR 'TWAS I WHO TOLD THE NORM QUEEN OF WHAT DOTH TRANSPIRE ON THE PLANET EARTH!
I PLEAD WITH THEE, MY LIEGE, DON'T--BUT WAIT!
MY MIND FAIR SPINS!
LORD ODIN--TELL ME 'TIS NOT TRUE--
NOT THIS! NOT "THE GAME"!
WHAT ANSWER MAY I GIVE THEE, VIZIER?
THOU HAST SEEN..., WHAT THOU HAST SEEN.
ART BOTH OF THEE MAD?
THY WORDS BE MEANINGLESS--
--AND TELL ME NAUGHT OF MY FAIR BELOVED BALDER!
--LET MY TEARS REACH THY HARDENED SOUL!
I PRITHEE, ALL-FATHER--IF ANGER WILL NOT TOUCH THEE--
PLEASE, TELL ME: WHAT IS THY PLAN?
WHAT DOST THOU WANT--OF THE MAN I TRULY LOVE?
KARNILLA, THY TEARS DO TOUCH ME!
FOR THIS--AND OTHER REASONS, BEYOND THY KEN--I'LL SHOW THEE WHAT THOU DOST NEED TO KNOW!
BUT, WOMAN, I WARN THEE--

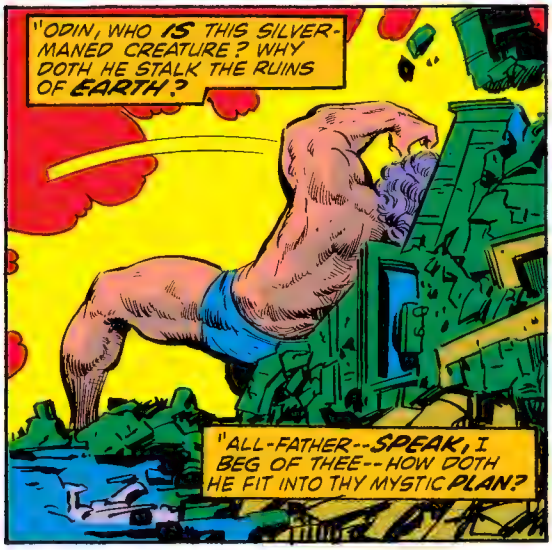
--'TWILL NOT BE A VISION TO THY LIKING--
--THIS I PROMISE THEE.
THE SMOKE DOTH CLEAR-- I SEE MOVING FIGURES--
"THERE, MILADY-- ODIN'S SON AND THY LOVED ONE DOTH FIGHT SIDE BY SIDE!"
"BUT WHAT MAD FIGHT IS THIS? THEY DO BATTLE MUTANT ANTS--
"--CREATURES UNLIKE ANY EVER BORN ON THIS PLANET EARTH!"
"STAY THY JUDGEMENT, KARNILLA--AND WATCH--
"WATCH AS THE GIANT INSECTS SUMMARILY FALL--
"--AND MY SON DOTH TURN-- TO ANOTHER FOE--"
EGO-PRIME!
THY MUTANT SLAVES HAVE BEEN ROUTED, DEMON--
--WILT THOU AT LAST FIGHT --THOR?
AYE, THUNDER GOD, I'LL FIGHT YOU-- STRENGTH VERSUS STRENGTH--
--POWER VERSUS POWER!
WELL ENOUGH, MONSTER: FOR I SWEAR TO THEE BY ODIN'S BEARD-- THE POWER, THE GLORY--

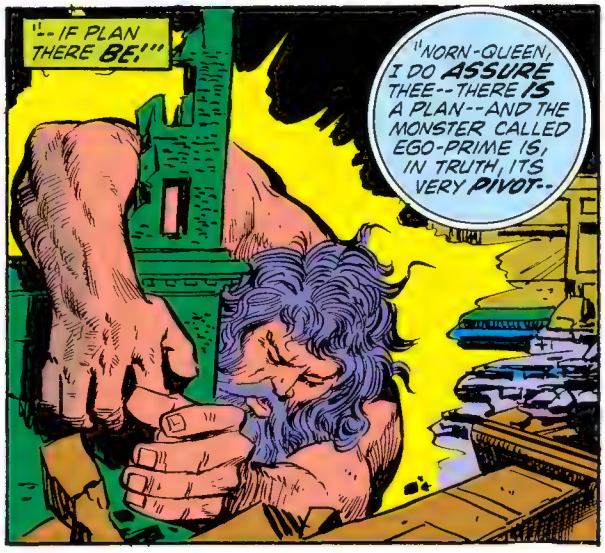

--IS MINE!
BUH-KOOM!


THOR, HE FALTERS NOT! STILL, HE RAGES--
--STILL, HE SURVIVES!
MILADY, THOU DOST FORGET THYSELF--

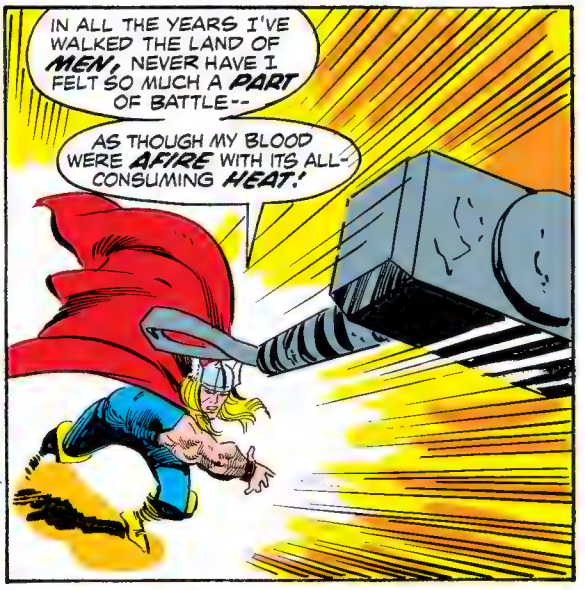
--ARE WE NOT ASGARD'S FINEST WARRIORS-- THE GREATEST OF THE LIVING GREAT?
SHALL WE BUCKLE LIKE KNEE-WEAK CHILDREN? OR SHALL WE GO ON--
--ON TO OUR FINAL HOUR--


--ON TO OUR NOBLE DEATHS!
BTAK!


"ODIN, WHO IS THIS SILVER-MANED CREATURE? WHY DOTH HE STALK THE RUINS OF EARTH?
"ALL-FATHER--SPEAK, I BEG OF THEE--HOW DOTH HE FIT INTO THY MYSTIC PLAN?

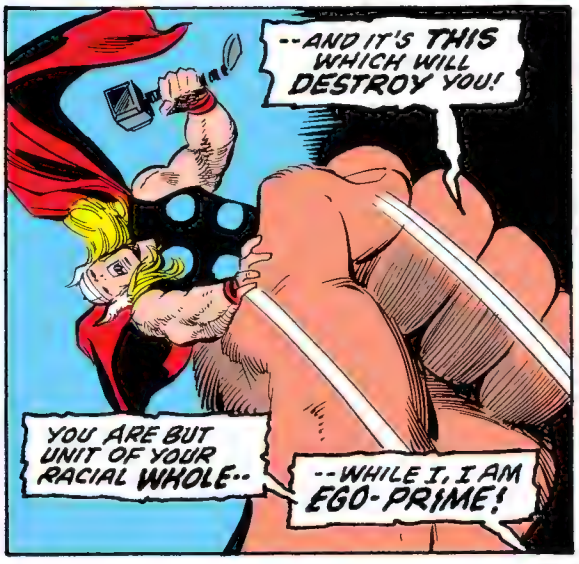

"--IF PLAN THERE BE!"
"NORN-QUEEN, I DO ASSURE THEE--THERE IS A PLAN--AND THE MONSTER CALLED EGO-PRIME IS, IN TRUTH, ITS VERY PIVOT--

"--AND MORE THAN THIS, I DARE NOT SAY!"

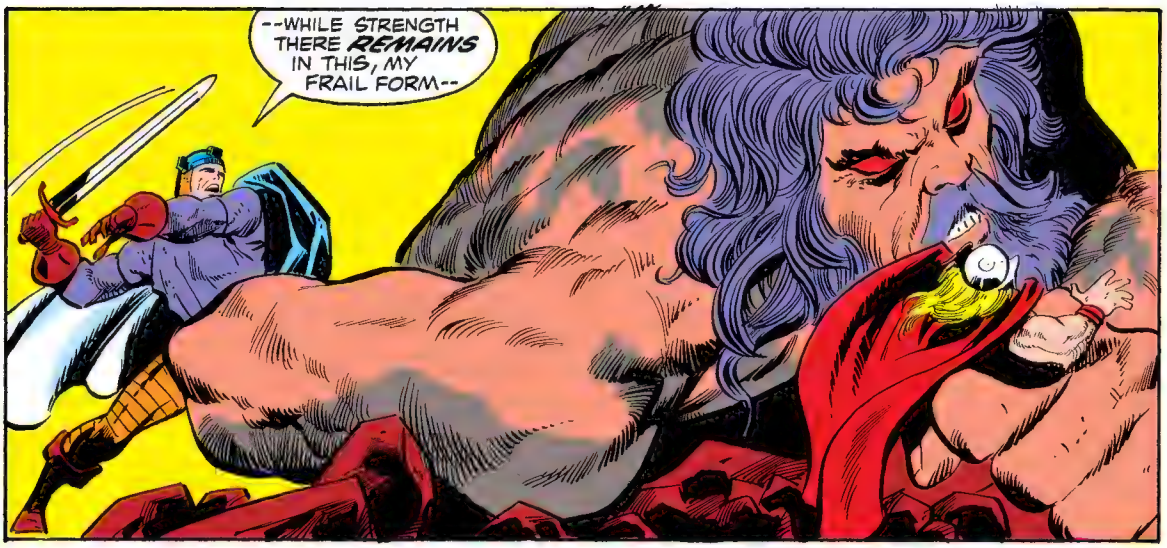

IN ALL THE YEARS I'VE WALKED THE LAND OF MEN, NEVER HAVE I FELT SO MUCH A PART OF BATTLE--
AS THOUGH MY BLOOD WERE AFIRE WITH ITS ALL-CONSUMING HEAT!

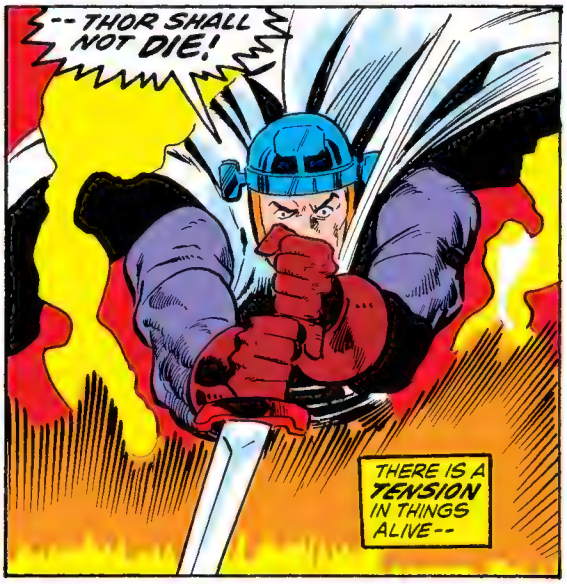
KRAK!

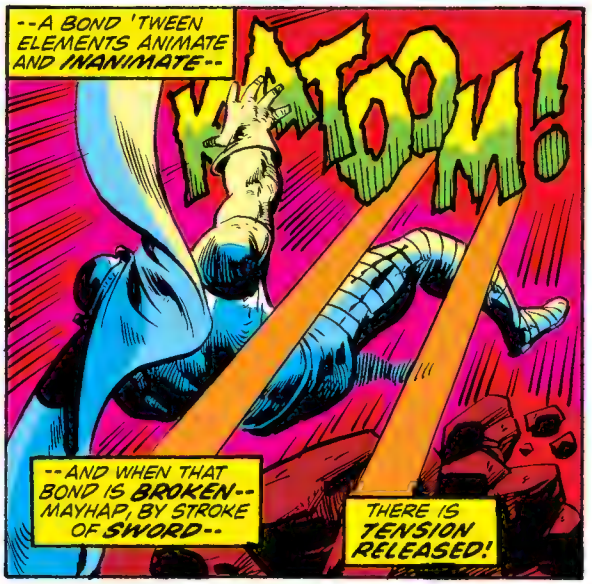
AND YET, I DO WELCOME THIS STRANGE SENSATION--
--FOR I DO UNDERSTAND IT, AND KNOW ITS CAUSE! I FIGHT NOT FOR MY OWN SURVIVAL--
--BUT FOR THE LIFE OF A LIVING RACE!
'TIS THIS WHICH DOTH FIRE ME--

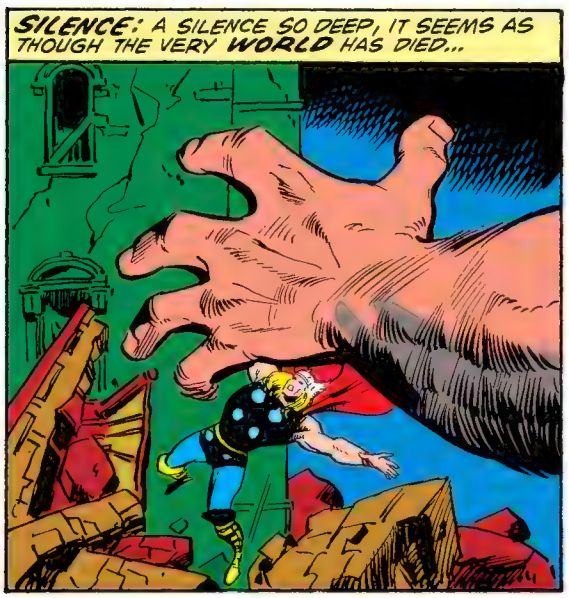

--AND IT'S THIS WHICH WILL DESTROY YOU!
YOU ARE BUT UNIT OF YOUR RACIAL WHOLE--
--WHILE I, I AM EGO-PRIME!

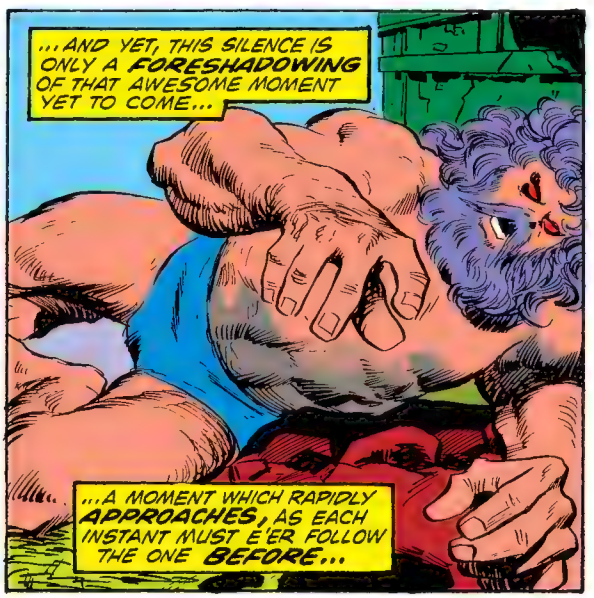
BALDER, WHAT SHALL WE DO?
THE CREATURE DOTH IGNORE OUR MIGHTIEST BLOWS--
THEN MUST WE FIND MIGHTIER ONES, MILADY!
FOR, THIS DO I SWEAR--


--WHILE STRENGTH THERE REMAINS IN THIS, MY FRAIL FORM--

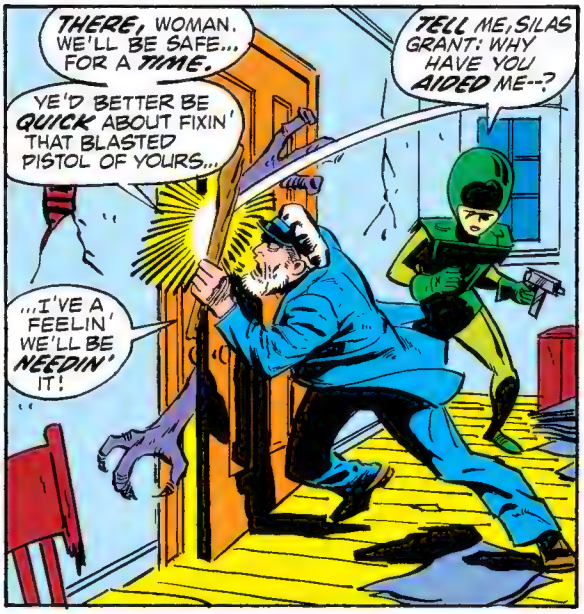

--THOR SHALL NOT DIE!
THERE IS A TENSION IN THINGS ALIVE--

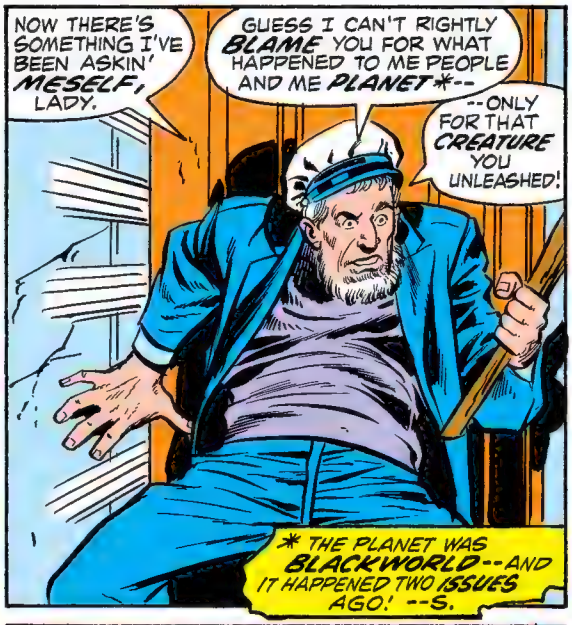

--A BOND 'TWEEN ELEMENTS ANIMATE AND INANIMATE--
KA-TOOM!
--AND WHEN THAT BOND IS BROKEN-- MAYHAP, BY STROKE OF SWORD--
THERE IS TENSION RELEASED!

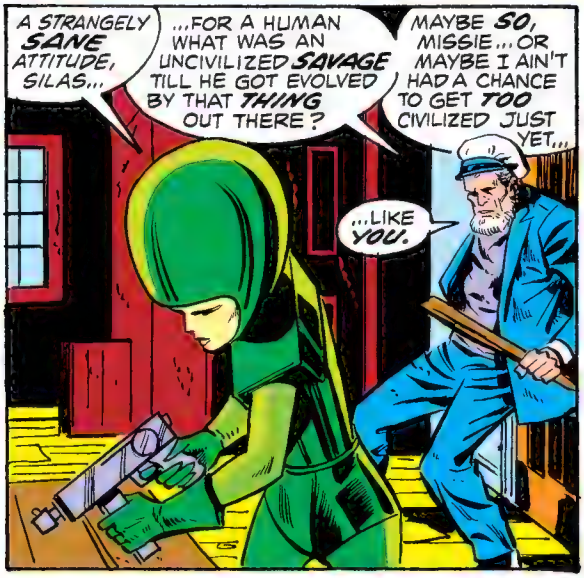

SILENCE: A SILENCE SO DEEP, IT SEEMS AS THOUGH THE VERY WORLD HAS DIED...

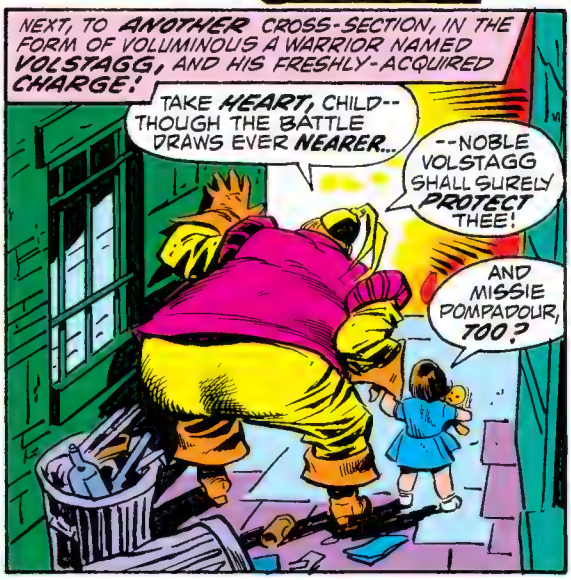

...AND YET, THIS SILENCE IS ONLY A FORESHADOWING OF THAT AWESOME MOMENT YET TO COME...
...A MOMENT WHICH RAPIDLY APPROACHES, AS EACH INSTANT MUST E'ER FOLLOW THE ONE BEFORE...

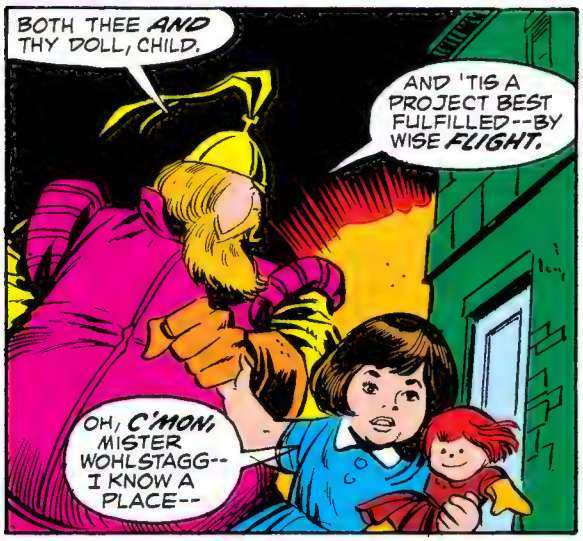
MY LORD, THOU ART FREE... AND YET...
THE CREATURE STILL DOTH LIVE... AND RISES ONCE MORE!
YEA, 'TIS AS I FEARED. NAUGHT MAY HOLD 'GAINST THAT GREY FORM!
MILADY, GET THEE BACK--
NAY! I'LL STAY WITH THEE, M'LOVE--
"--FOR, I THINK, THE FINAL SECONDS ARE NEAR 'PON US-- AND I'LL HAVE THINE ARMS IN MINE WHEN THAT FATAL INSTANT COMES!"
SUDDENLY, THE GODDESS SIF'S WORDS DIE AWAY-- HER FORM BECOMES MOTIONLESS, AND HER EYES RIVETED TO THE VISION BEFORE HER--
--RIVETED, AS ARE THE EYES OF CERTAIN NEW ARRIVALS--!
LORD HEIMDAL, WHAT DOTH ALL THIS WRECKAGE MEAN?
BUT ONE WEEK AGO--
--BUT ONE WEEK AGO, WE STOOD ABOARD A SHIP, FRIEND KAMORR--!
ONE WEEK AGO, ODIN'S PLAN WAS NAUGHT BUT DREAM-WORK--
--AND NOW, 'TIS NEAR REALITY!
BUT, MASTER, MASTER--!
I DO SEE THE CREATURE, KAMORR.
I DO SEE, AND KNOW--
"THE MOMENT OF TRUTH-- IS NOW!"
A CROSS-SECTION, IF YOU WILL, OF THIS COSMOS-CHANGING MOMENT; FIRST, TO SILAS GRANT AND TANA NILE-- AND A TENEMENT SCANT BLOCKS AWAY--
BACK, YE DEMON-SPAWN OF HADES!
AN HOUR AGO YE MAY HAVE BEEN MEN--
--BUT NOW, YE'RE LUSTIN' SCAVENGERS-- AN' TO THE PIT WITH YE ALL!

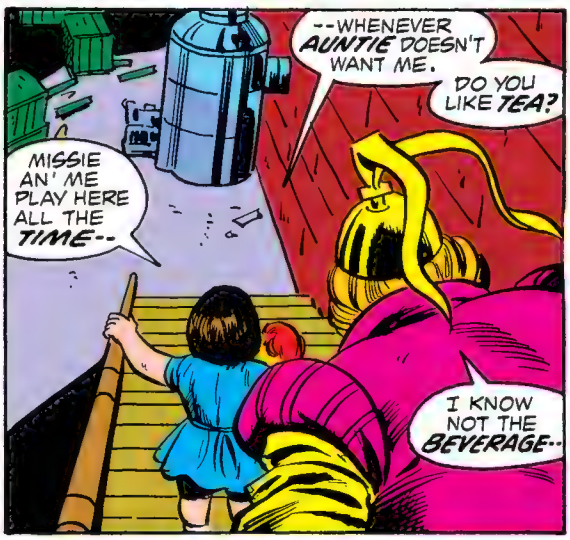

THERE, WOMAN. WE'LL BE SAFE... FOR A TIME.
TELL ME, SILAS GRANT: WHY HAVE YOU AIDED ME--?
YE'D BETTER BE QUICK ABOUT FIXIN' THAT BLASTED PISTOL OF YOURS...
...I'VE A FEELIN' WE'LL BE NEEDIN' IT!

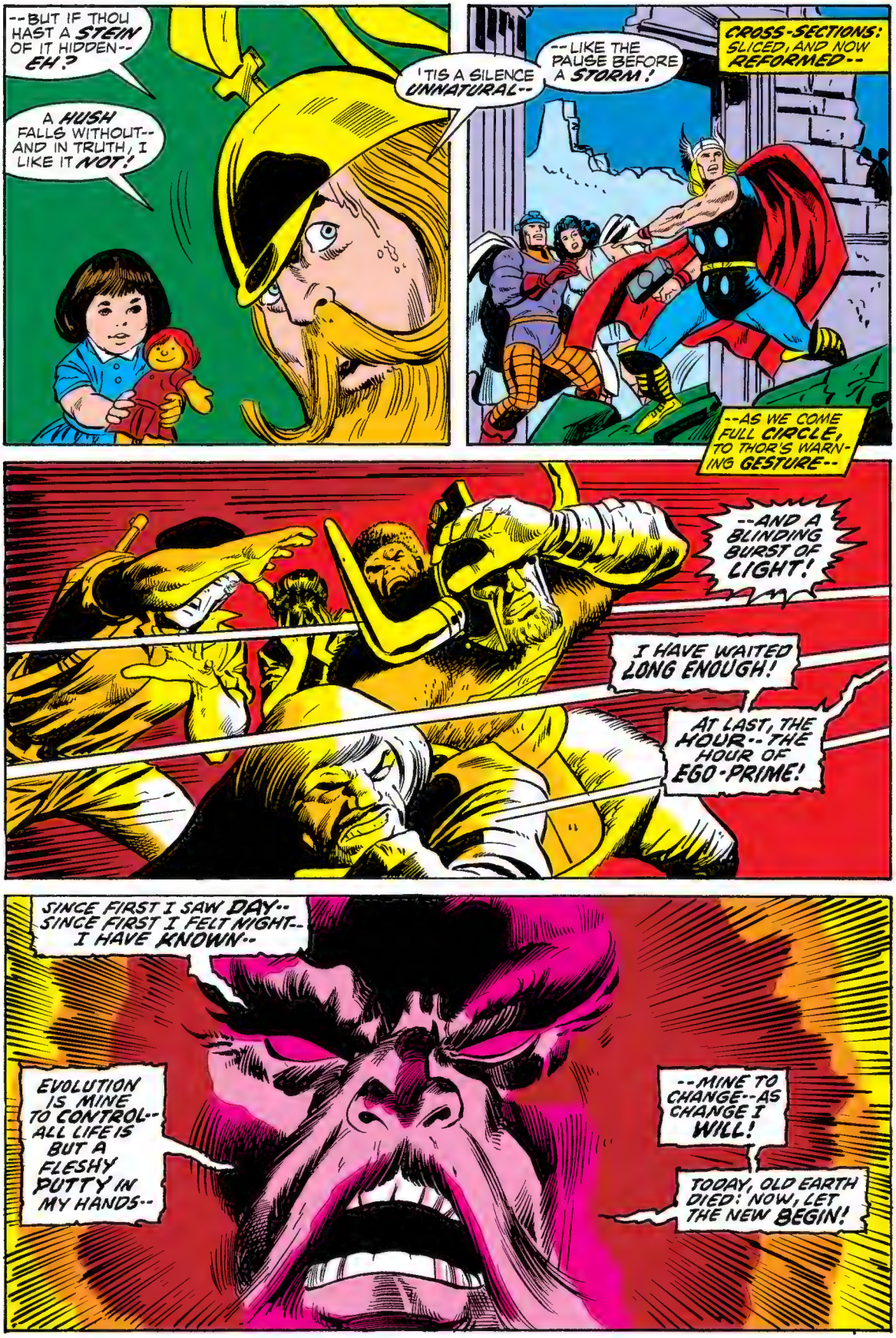

NOW THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN ASKIN' MESELF, LADY.
GUESS I CAN'T RIGHTLY BLAME YOU FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO ME PEOPLE AND ME PLANET*--
--ONLY FOR THAT CREATURE YOU UNLEASHED!
* THE PLANET WAS BLACKWORLD--AND IT HAPPENED TWO ISSUES AGO! --S.


A STRANGELY SANE ATTITUDE, SILAS...
...FOR A HUMAN WHAT WAS AN UNCIVILIZED SAVAGE TILL HE GOT EVOLVED BY THAT THING OUT THERE?
MAYBE SO, MISSIE... OR MAYBE I AIN'T HAD A CHANCE TO GET TOO CIVILIZED JUST YET...
...LIKE YOU.


NEXT, TO ANOTHER CROSS-SECTION, IN THE FORM OF VOLUMINOUS A WARRIOR NAMED VOLSTAGG, AND HIS FRESHLY-ACQUIRED CHARGE!
TAKE HEART, CHILD-- THOUGH THE BATTLE DRAWS EVER NEARER...
--NOBLE VOLSTAGG SHALL SURELY PROTECT THEE!
AND MISSIE POMPADOUR, TOO?


BOTH THEE AND THY DOLL, CHILD.
AND 'TIS A PROJECT BEST FULFILLED--BY WISE FLIGHT.
OH, C'MON, MISTER WOHLSTAGG-- I KNOW A PLACE--


--WHENEVER AUNTIE DOESN'T WANT ME.
DO YOU LIKE TEA?
MISSIE AN' ME PLAY HERE ALL THE TIME--
I KNOW NOT THE BEVERAGE--


--BUT IF THOU HAST A STEIN OF IT HIDDEN-- EH?
A HUSH FALLS WITHOUT-- AND IN TRUTH, I LIKE IT NOT!
'TIS A SILENCE UNNATURAL--
--LIKE THE PAUSE BEFORE A STORM!
CROSS-SECTIONS: SLICED, AND NOW REFORMED--
--AS WE COME FULL CIRCLE, TO THOR'S WARNING GESTURE--
--AND A BLINDING BURST OF LIGHT!
I HAVE WAITED LONG ENOUGH!
AT LAST, THE HOUR--THE HOUR OF EGO-PRIME!
SINCE FIRST I SAW DAY-- SINCE FIRST I FELT NIGHT-- I HAVE KNOWN--
EVOLUTION IS MINE TO CONTROL-- ALL LIFE IS BUT A FLESHY PUTTY IN MY HANDS--
--MINE TO CHANGE--AS CHANGE I WILL!
TODAY, OLD EARTH DIED: NOW, LET THE NEW BEGIN!

IMAGINE YOURSELF A GOD--A MOBILE SECTION OF A LIVING PLANET!
IMAGINE THE WORLD TREMBLING IN THE LIGHTEST GRASP OF YOUR IDLE FINGERS--
--THE UNIVERSE A COSMIC TOY, THE MYRIAD SUNS NO MORE THAN PASSING PLAYTHINGS!
IMAGINE ALL THIS, AND TRY, TRY, TO IMAGINE EVEN MORE--
--AND THEN, AS ALL YOUR MIGHTY IMAGINED WORLD SWELLS TO COMPLETION--
--DESTROY IT, UNWITTINGLY, UNKNOWINGLY--WITH A SINGLE FOOLISH GESTURE!

AND IN THE MOMENT AFTER-- AS THOSE AROUND YOU STARE IN BEWILDERED DISBELIEF--
--REALIZE YOUR ERROR; UNDERSTAND THE DEPTH AND HORROR OF YOUR HIDEOUS MISTAKE--
--FEEL THE LIFE-BLOOD EBBING FROM YOUR FORM AND SHAPE--
--AND SLOWLY, MUTELY--
--FADE AWAY!
BY ODIN'S SACRED SWORD...
THE DEMON DID DRAIN ITSELF... OR, MAYHAP... WAS DRAINED.
MILORD, MILORD... WHAT CAN IT MATTER?
'TIS OVER... 'TIS DONE.
ALL THAT WAS, IS NO MORE... WHATE'ER THE REASON, WHATE'ER THE METHOD...
THAT MONSTROUS CREATURE IS GONE!
MY LADY, FORGIVE ME-- BUT METHINKS THE END HATH NOT YET COME!
MILORD AND LADY-- LOOK!

HOW OFTEN HAVE POETS SUNG OF THE GREATNESS WHICH LIES SLEEPING IN THE SOUL OF MAN?
ON THIS COLD MORNING, NO POETS SING. WHAT NEED IS THERE FOR SONG, WHEN THE THEME IS FULFILLED?
TOO OFTEN...TOO OFTEN... TOO OFTEN HAVE WE TURNED A DEAF EAR TO THEIR SONG, TOO OFTEN HAVE WE PREFERRED A BLIND INNER EYE...
...RATHER THAN A TRUE VIEW OF OUR ULTIMATE AND CEASELESSLY FRUSTRATED POTENTIAL!
HEIMDAL, GUARDIAN OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE--!
FRIEND AND FELLOW, WHAT MEANING HAS THIS? WHO ARE THESE TRANSFORMED MORTALS?
WHAT BE THEIR PURPOSE, AND THINE--AND IN THE NAME OF ODIN, HOW--?
"MY SON, 'TIS I WHO WILL ANSWER THY WORTHY QUESTIONS--
"--AND BY ALL THE FATES, GLAD I AM THAT AT LAST--I CAN!
"ALL THREE WERE TRANSFORMED, AS THOU SAYEST, TO A HIGHER FORM OF HUMAN LIFE--
MILORD, 'TIS STILL A MYSTERY! WHY--?
"--AND TRULY, THIS WAS DONE-- BY EGO-PRIME!"

"TWAS MY PLAN FROM THE VERY BEGINNING-- E'EN BEFORE THE DREAD MANGOG DID REAPPEAR!
"FOR THIS DID I SEND SIF TO BLACKWORLD-- AND THEE TO WORLD'S END-- AND HEIMDAL HERE TO EARTH--!
"ONLY BY THE MOST ELABORATE SCHEME COULD MY DELICATE PLAN SUCCEED--
"--AND SUCCEED IT HAS, FOR THIS DAY A NEW RACE OF GODS HAS BEEN BORN--
"--A YOUNGER RACE--
"--ONE WHICH WILL BREATHE FRESH FIRE INTO THE FURNACE OF THE COSMIC ALL!"
AND WHAT OF EARTH?
DIDST THOU NEED TO DECIMATE A WORLD-- FOR A PLAN?
"ALL SHALL BE AS IT WAS BEFORE--
"THE MORTALS WILL HAVE NO MEMORY OF WHAT HAS OCCURRED--!
YEA-- AND OUR MEMORIES, MILORD?
THOU DIDST MAKE US PAWNS-- PIECES IN A GAME--!
TELL ME, NOBLE ODIN, BELOVED FATHER, FAITHFUL LIEGE--
WERT THOU CERTAIN THAT ALL THY PRECIOUS PAWNS WOULD SURVIVE THY PLANNING AND PLOTTING--?
OR DIDST THOU NOT EVEN CARE??
NEXT: EXILE on EARTH!!

THOR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP™
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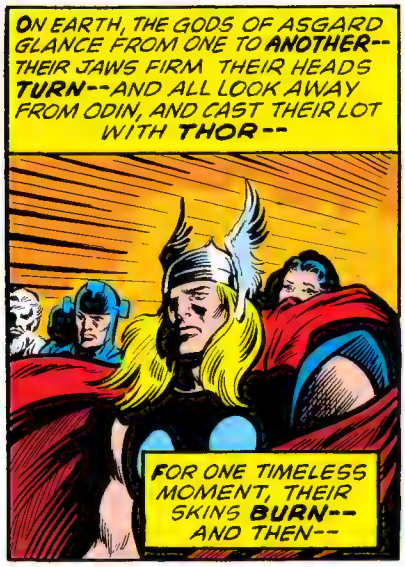
THE MIGHTY
THOR
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MY LORD--THE DEMON DRAGS US DOWN--DOWN--
BUT--WHAT WILL BE OUR FATE??
THE FATE, MILADY, OF THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE--
OBLIVION--AND DEATH!!
THE DEMON FROM THE DEPTHS!

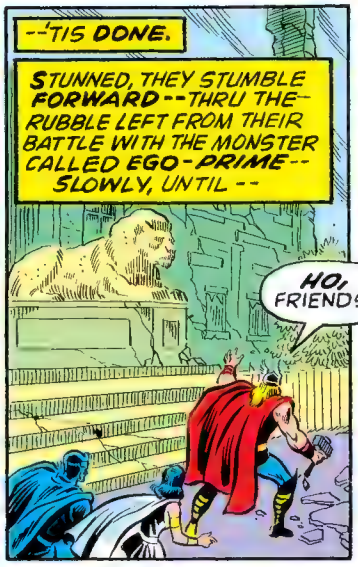
THE MIGHTY THOR!™

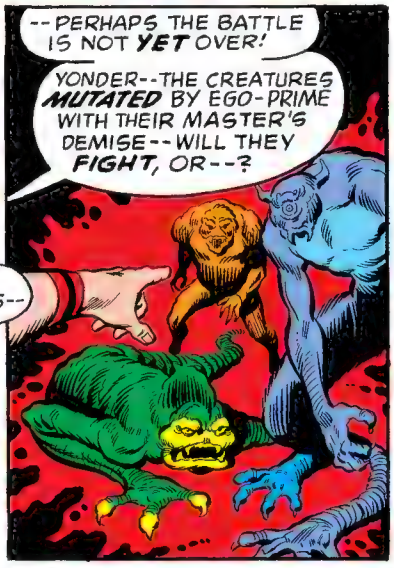
INGRACIOUS UPSTART! THOU DOST DARE TO QUESTION THINE OWN FATHER? TO MOCK ME, TO TURN AWAY FROM ME?
FOR THIS AND OTHER, MORE PAINFUL INSULTS SHALT THOU BE EXILED--YEA, FOR ALL ETERNITY--
EXILED ON EARTH!
SPEAK, THOR--BEG THY FATHER'S FORGIVENESS.
ASK ODIN'S MERCY--ERE THE MOMENT PASS--AND ALL BE LOST!
'TIS ALREADY DONE. I HAVE SAID WHAT I MUST--
THOU MUST ASK NO MORE!
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
GERRY CONWAY, SCRIPTER
JOHN BUSCEMA, PENCILLER
JIM MOONEY, FINISHED ART
SHELLY LEFERMAN letterer
ROY THOMAS, EDITOR

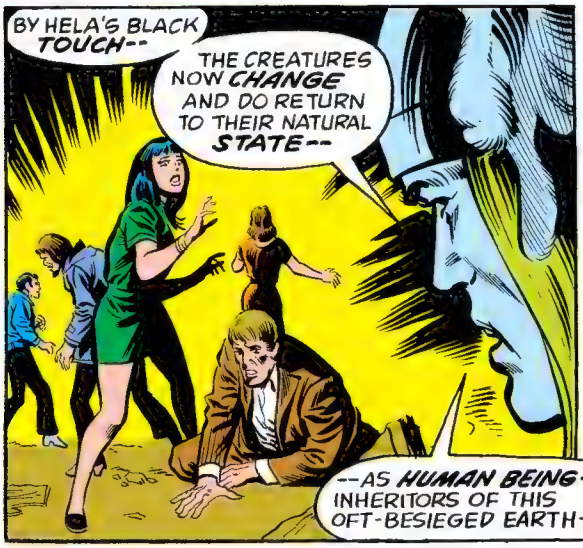
ENOUGH! I'LL HEAR NO FURTHER CARPING--
WHAT RIGHT HAST THOU TO JUDGE THY FATHER'S MEANING OR INTENT? WHAT I DID,* I DID BECAUSE I FOUND IT NECESSARY!
THE UNIVERSE HAD NEED OF A NEW RACE, A RACE ONLY EARTH COULD PROVIDE--
*LAST ISSUE.--ROY

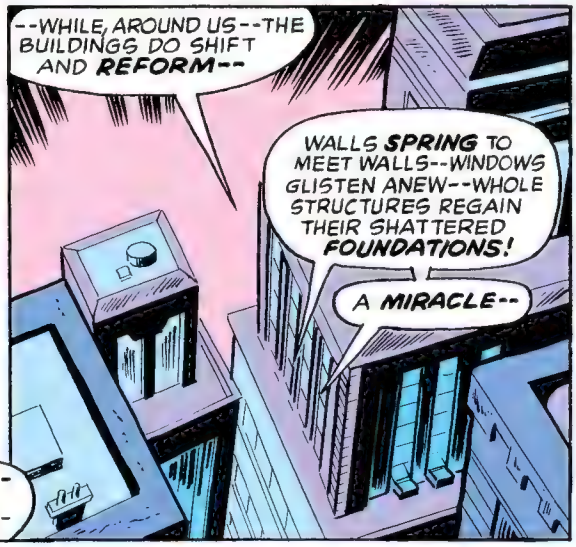
--AND 'TWAS ODIN'S CHOICE --AND ODIN'S ALONE--
--AND NONE MAY SAY ME NAY!


ON EARTH, THE GODS OF ASGARD GLANCE FROM ONE TO ANOTHER-- THEIR JAWS FIRM THEIR HEADS TURN--AND ALL LOOK AWAY FROM ODIN, AND CAST THEIR LOT WITH THOR--
FOR ONE TIMELESS MOMENT, THEIR SKINS BURN-- AND THEN--


--'TIS DONE.
STUNNED, THEY STUMBLE FORWARD--THRU THE RUBBLE LEFT FROM THEIR BATTLE WITH THE MONSTER CALLED EGO-PRIME-- SLOWLY, UNTIL --
HO, FRIENDS--

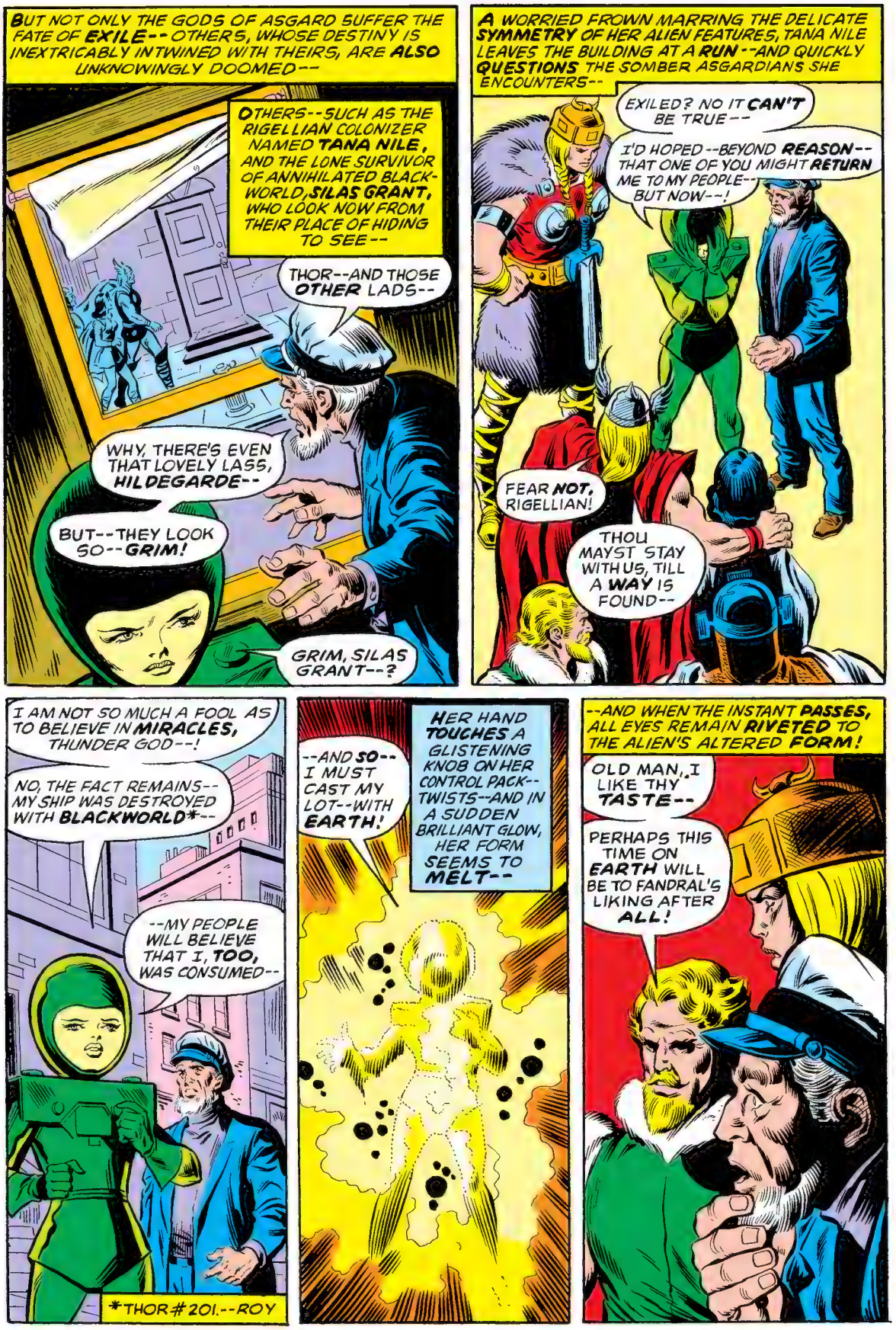

--PERHAPS THE BATTLE IS NOT YET OVER!
YONDER--THE CREATURES MUTATED BY EGO-PRIME WITH THEIR MASTER'S DEMISE--WILL THEY FIGHT, OR--?


BY HELA'S BLACK TOUCH--
THE CREATURES NOW CHANGE AND DO RETURN TO THEIR NATURAL STATE--
--AS HUMAN BEING-- INHERITORS OF THIS OFT-BESIEGED EARTH--

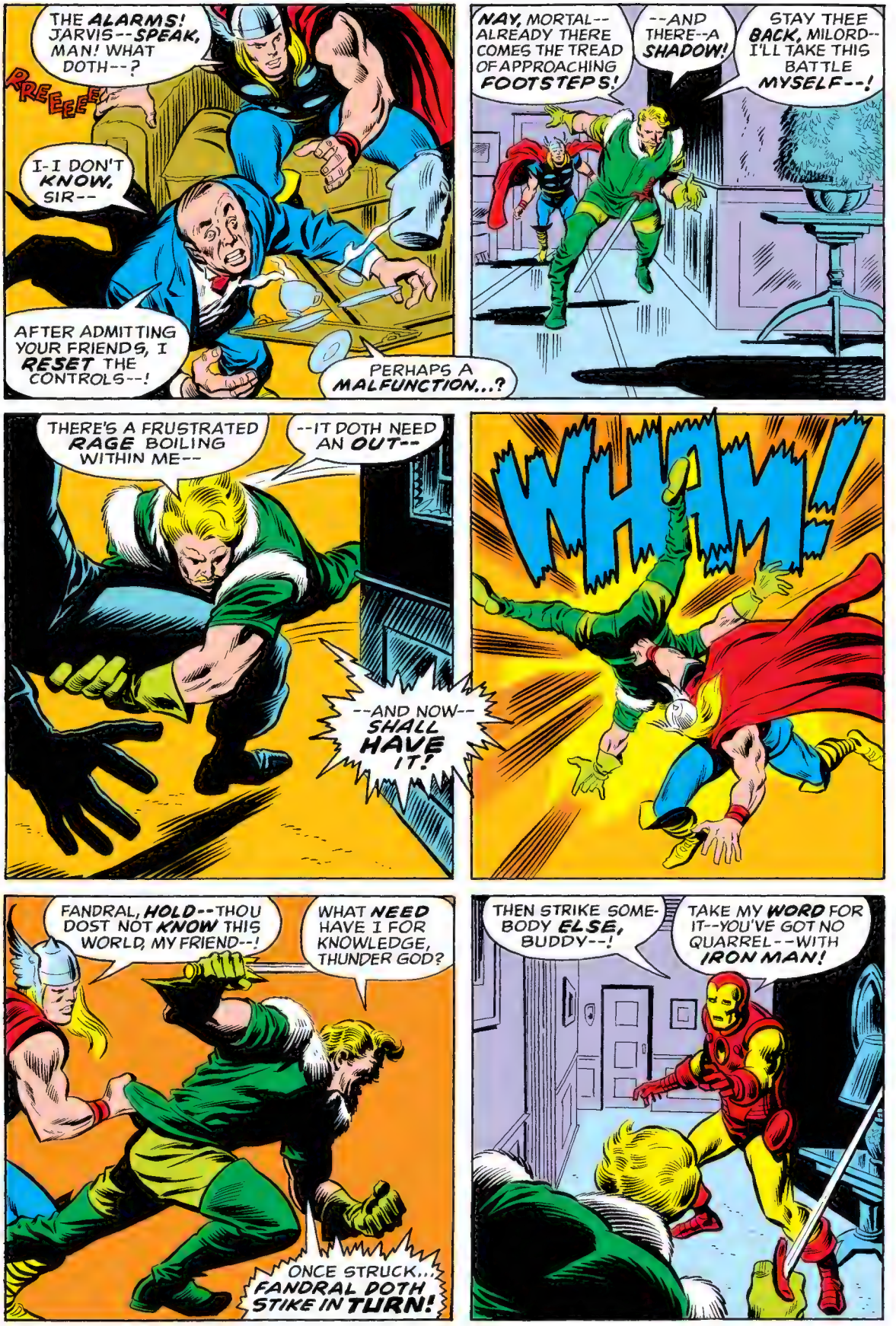

--WHILE, AROUND US--THE BUILDINGS DO SHIFT AND REFORM--
WALLS SPRING TO MEET WALLS--WINDOWS GLISTEN ANEW--WHOLE STRUCTURES REGAIN THEIR SHATTERED FOUNDATIONS!
A MIRACLE--

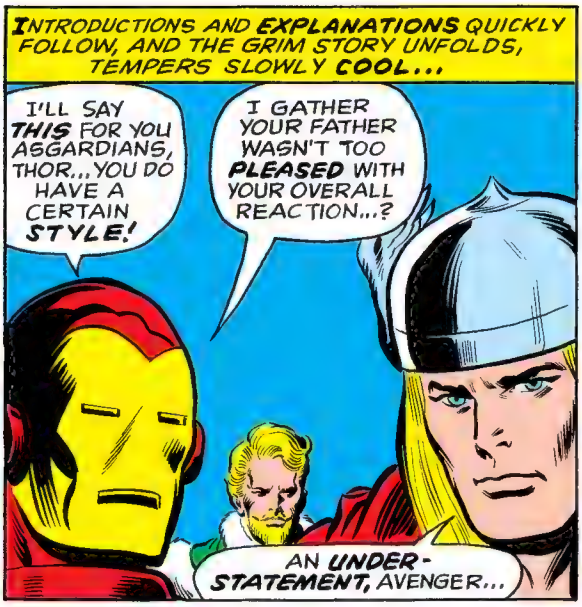
--ONE WROUGHT BY ODIN, METHINKS --TO RIGHT WHAT WRONGS HE DID THIS DAY--
--AND RIGHT THEM ALL-- WITHOUT A WORD OF SORROW--
NOR AN ADMISSION OF DESERVED GRIEF!
LONG MINUTES PASS--AND 'CROSS THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF THE ISLE CALLED MANHATTAN, BUILDINGS REGAIN THEIR CONCRETE GLORY--WHILE, SHORT BLOCKS FROM THE EXILED THUNDER GOD--
I LIKE IT NOT, KAMOOR.
AFTER BRINGING THOSE THREE EARTHLINGS BEFORE EGO-PRIME WE HAVE HEARD NAUGHT FROM THE ALL-FATHER.
IT DOTH GIVE ME CAUSE TO FEAR--
AYE, MASTER HEIMDAL-- E'EN WHEN THE WORLD ABOUT US TRANSFORMS--
--I CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER IF ODIN HATH FORGOTTEN--
ZOUNDS!
IT APPEARS WE WORRIED IN VAIN, GOOD FRIEND--
NOBLE ODIN HATH NOT ABANDONED US--
NAY--IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, HE SPIRITS US HOMEWARD--
HOME--TO FAR-DISTANT ASGARD, WHERE ONCE MORE I'LL FIND MY FEET 'PON THE RAINBOW BRIDGE--
--TO GIVE MY SWORD-- YEA, MY VERY SOUL-- FOR ODIN--AND FOR ASGARD!
VOW NOT UNDYING FEALTY, HEIMDAL.
I TRUST IT NOT-- IN MAN OR MORTAL-- AND NE'ER AGAIN, IN SON.
MILORD--THOU DOST KNOW MY HEART BE THINE--
--AND THOUGH HEIMDAL MAY NEVER CLAIM THEE FATHER--
--ALWAYS SHALL HE CALL THEE LIEGE!
THINK THEE TWICE, GUARDSMAN--
THY "LIEGE" IS BUT A DARK BETRAYER!

KARNILLA, WATCH THY TONGUE!
AS NORN QUEEN, THOU ART BUT A GUEST IN ODIN'S REALM--
BE STILL, OLD ONE--AND THOU, HEIMDAL--LET THEE SPEAK--
--AND ASK THY LORD WHERE BE HIS SON AND KIND COMPANIONS!
MILORD--DARE I ASK?
HAS THE NOBLE THOR FALLEN? ARE WE TO LOSE SUCH A BLESSED PRINCE?
FALLEN NAY--
--IF ONLY IT WERE SO!
DEATH WOULD BRING GRIEF--NOT SO BITTER AN ANGER--
NOT SO DEEP A DISGRACE!
HE SAW FIT TO CALL ME UNTHINKING--TO SAY I CARED NOT THAT EARTHMEN MIGHT BE INJURED BY MY COSMIC PLAN--
MY OWN SON--DID CALL ME CRUEL--
AND FOR THAT SHALL HE DEARLY PAY!
STARS! NEVER HAVE I SEEN ODIN RAGE SO--
YEA--BUT NOT SO MUCH AT THOR, I THINK--
--AS AT HIMSELF!
A PRETTY THOUGHT, VIZIER--BUT POINTLESS--
--FOR WHAT CAN IT MATTER WHEN MY BELOVED BALDER STANDS TRAPPED UPON A DISTANT WORLD--
--AND ALL ASGARD WAILS FOR HIS--AND THEIR--MOST SWIFT RETURN!

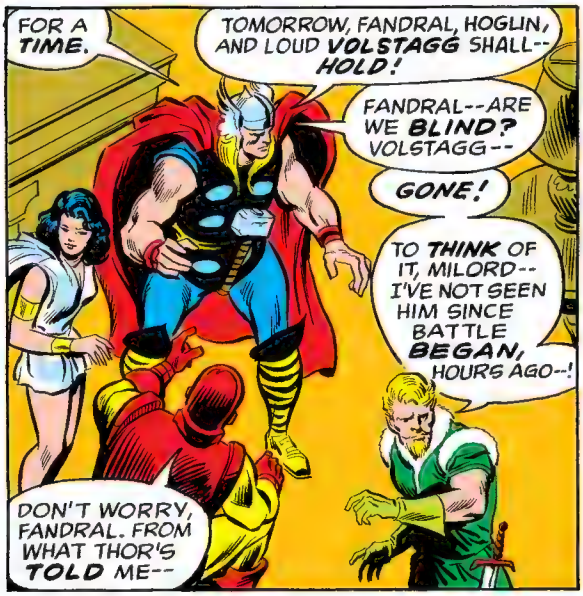

BUT NOT ONLY THE GODS OF ASGARD SUFFER THE FATE OF EXILE--OTHERS, WHOSE DESTINY IS INEXTRICABLY INTWINED WITH THEIRS, ARE ALSO UNKNOWINGLY DOOMED--
OTHERS--SUCH AS THE RIGELLIAN COLONIZER NAMED TANA NILE, AND THE LONE SURVIVOR OF ANNIHILATED BLACK-WORLD, SILAS GRANT, WHO LOOK NOW FROM THEIR PLACE OF HIDING TO SEE--
THOR--AND THOSE OTHER LADS--
WHY, THERE'S EVEN THAT LOVELY LASS, HILDEGARDE--
BUT--THEY LOOK SO--GRIM!
GRIM, SILAS GRANT--?
A WORRIED FROWN MARRING THE DELICATE SYMMETRY OF HER ALIEN FEATURES, TANA NILE LEAVES THE BUILDING AT A RUN--AND QUICKLY QUESTIONS THE SOMBER ASGARDIANS SHE ENCOUNTERS--
EXILED? NO IT CAN'T BE TRUE--
I'D HOPED--BEYOND REASON--THAT ONE OF YOU MIGHT RETURN ME TO MY PEOPLE--BUT NOW--!
FEAR NOT, RIGELLIAN!
THOU MAYST STAY WITH US, TILL A WAY IS FOUND--
I AM NOT SO MUCH A FOOL AS TO BELIEVE IN MIRACLES, THUNDER GOD--!
NO, THE FACT REMAINS--MY SHIP WAS DESTROYED WITH BLACKWORLD*--
--MY PEOPLE WILL BELIEVE THAT I, TOO, WAS CONSUMED--
*THOR #201.--ROY
--AND SO--I MUST CAST MY LOT--WITH EARTH!
HER HAND TOUCHES A GLISTENING KNOB ON HER CONTROL PACK--TWISTS--AND IN A SUDDEN BRILLIANT GLOW, HER FORM SEEMS TO MELT--
--AND WHEN THE INSTANT PASSES, ALL EYES REMAIN RIVETED TO THE ALIEN'S ALTERED FORM!
OLD MAN, I LIKE THY TASTE--
PERHAPS THIS TIME ON EARTH WILL BE TO FANDRAL'S LIKING AFTER ALL!

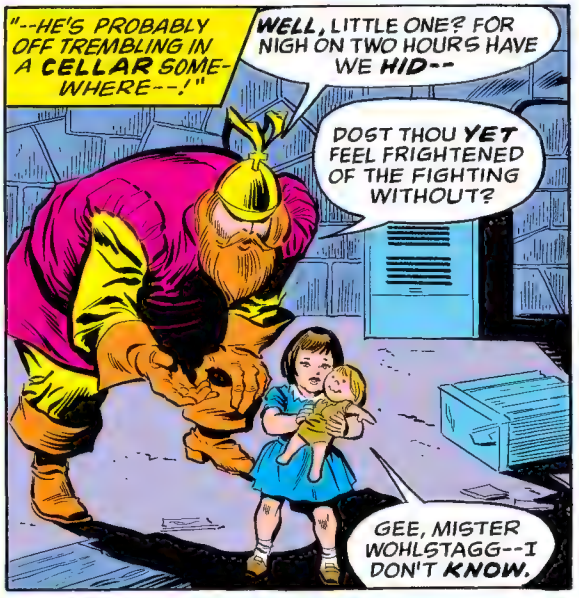
TIME WILL TELL, ASGARDIAN. I THINK WE'LL EACH HAVE ADJUSMENTS TO MAKE, IF WE'RE ALL TO SURVIVE.
THOUGH I'VE LIVED ON THIS WORLD BEFORE, I LIVED ALOOF,..APART FROM THE STREAM OF LIFE, AN OUTSIDER...
NOW...AS I'VE CHANGED MY APPEARANCE ,,,SO MUST I CHANGE MY MIND.
SENTIMENTS MOST FAIR, TANA NILE,,.ONES WE'D ALL DO WELL TO EMULATE IN THE DAYS AHEAD.
YET BEFORE WE DO LEARN HOW TO LIVE AMONGST THE MEN OF EARTH,...
...WE MUST FIND WHERE TO LIVE...
...AND METHINKS I DO HAVE AN ANSWER!
ON A FAMILIAR STREET IN THE EAST SIXTIES, OVERLOOKING THE GREEN AND BROWN HILLOCK'S OF MANHATTAN'S CENTRAL PARK, THERE STANDS A CERTAIN MANSION--OWNED BY MILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST TONY STARK--AND CURRENTLY ON PERMANENT LEASE TO THE GROUP OF WORLD-FAMOUS ADVENTURERS CALLED-- THE AVENGERS!
IT IS THERE, SEVERAL HOURS LATER, THAT WE FIND THOR AND HIS MOROSE COMPANIONS--EACH SUFFERING, JUST A LITTLE, FROM HIS OWN PRIVATE FORM OF DELAYED SHOCK--
--AND SUFFERING IN SILENCE, UNTIL--

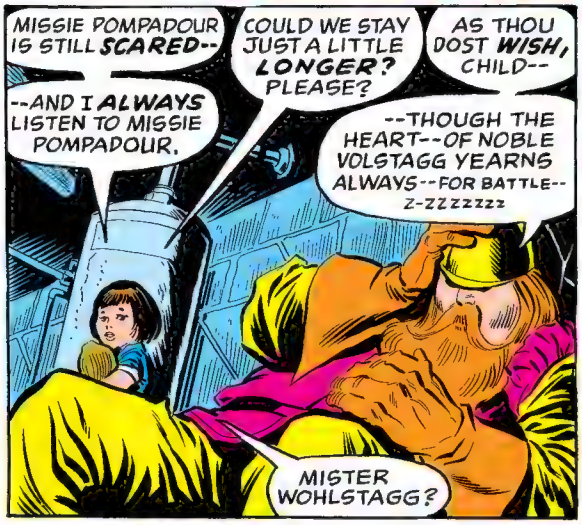

THE ALARMS! JARVIS--SPEAK, MAN! WHAT DOTH--?
PREEEEE!
I-I DON'T KNOW, SIR--
AFTER ADMITTING YOUR FRIENDS, I RESET THE CONTROLS--!
PERHAPS A MALFUNCTION...?
NAY, MORTAL--ALREADY THERE COMES THE TREAD OF APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS!
--AND THERE--A SHADOW!
STAY THEE BACK, MILORD--I'LL TAKE THIS BATTLE MYSELF--!
THERE'S A FRUSTRATED RAGE BOILING WITHIN ME--
--IT DOTH NEED AN OUT--
--AND NOW--SHALL HAVE IT!
WHAM!
FANDRAL, HOLD--THOU DOST NOT KNOW THIS WORLD, MY FRIEND--!
WHAT NEED HAVE I FOR KNOWLEDGE, THUNDER GOD?
ONCE STRUCK... FANDRAL DOTH STIKE IN TURN!
THEN STRIKE SOMEBODY ELSE, BUDDY--!
TAKE MY WORD FOR IT--YOU'VE GOT NO QUARREL--WITH IRON MAN!

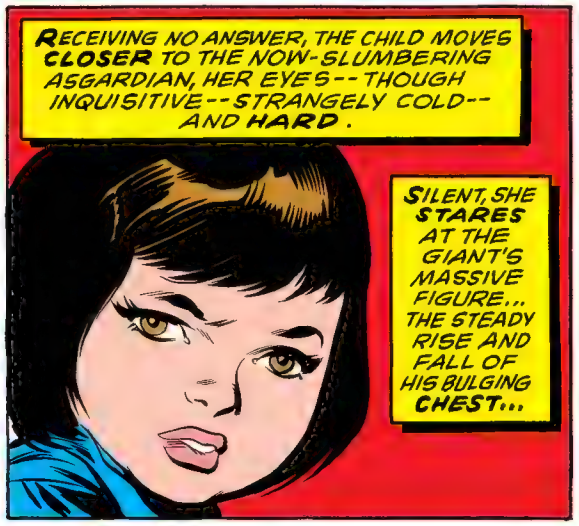

INTRODUCTIONS AND EXPLANATIONS QUICKLY FOLLOW, AND THE GRIM STORY UNFOLDS, TEMPERS SLOWLY COOL...
I'LL SAY THIS FOR YOU ASGARDIANS, THOR... YOU DO HAVE A CERTAIN STYLE!
I GATHER YOUR FATHER WASN'T TOO PLEASED WITH YOUR OVERALL REACTION...?
AN UNDER-STATEMENT, AVENGER...

...AS PUNISHMENT FOR OUR "DISLOYAL CRITICISM" WE HAVE BEEN MAROONED ON THY PLANET... A SITUATION LESS DESIRED THAN THOU WOULDST THINK.
TELL ME SOMETHING NEW, THUNDER GOD.
I'M A NEW YORKER, REMEMBER?
ONE CITY SEEMS MUCH LIKE ANOTHER, MY FRIEND...
...AND NONE SATISFACTORY.
YEAH... I SEE YOUR POINT.
GUESS YOU'LL BE STOPPING HERE A WHILE, RIGHT?


FOR A TIME.
TOMORROW, FANDRAL, HOGLIN, AND LOUD VOLSTAGG SHALL-- HOLD!
FANDRAL--ARE WE BLIND? VOLSTAGG--
GONE!
TO THINK OF IT, MILORD-- I'VE NOT SEEN HIM SINCE BATTLE BEGAN, HOURS AGO--!
DON'T WORRY, FANDRAL. FROM WHAT THOR'S TOLD ME--


"--HE'S PROBABLY OFF TREMBLING IN A CELLAR SOME-WHERE--!"
WELL, LITTLE ONE? FOR NIGH ON TWO HOURS HAVE WE HID--
DOST THOU YET FEEL FRIGHTENED OF THE FIGHTING WITHOUT?
GEE, MISTER WOHLSTAGG--I DON'T KNOW.


MISSIE POMPADOUR IS STILL SCARED--
--AND I ALWAYS LISTEN TO MISSIE POMPADOUR.
COULD WE STAY JUST A LITTLE LONGER? PLEASE?
AS THOU DOST WISH, CHILD--
--THOUGH THE HEART--OF NOBLE VOLSTAGG YEARNS ALWAYS--FOR BATTLE--
Z-ZZZZZZZ
MISTER WOHLSTAGG?


RECEIVING NO ANSWER, THE CHILD MOVES CLOSER TO THE NOW-SLUMBERING ASGARDIAN, HER EYES--THOUGH INQUISITIVE--STRANGELY COLD--AND HARD.
SILENT, SHE STARES AT THE GIANT'S MASSIVE FIGURE... THE STEADY RISE AND FALL OF HIS BULGING CHEST...

SATISFIED WITH WHAT SHE SEES, THE GIRL TURNS TOWARD THE SHADOWS AT THE REAR OF THE MUSTY BASEMENT, HUMMING SOFTLY TO HERSELF AS SHE WALKS INTO A SEEMING CORNER...
...AND WITH A SMILE, GREETS SOMETHING TALL..., AND DARK.

AS IN ALL THINGS, THERE ARE **DEGREES** OF DEPRESSION AND DESPAIR--AND FOR ONE WHO LOVES AS STRONGLY AS **THOR** LOVES, AND HAS HAD THAT LOVE SEEMINGLY **BETRAYED** BY HIS OWN FATHER'S HAND--THE DESPAIR IS GREAT--THE DEPRESSION, **DEEP**--

AND SO, IN THE AVENGERS MANSION LATER THAT AFTERNOON, AS THE OTHERS **EXPLORE** THEIR NEW LAND--AND SEARCH FOR THE MISSING **VOLSTAGG**--THOR SITS BROODING, LOST IN DARK THOUGHTS, UNTIL--

MILORD,,,?

FORGIVE ME, FAIR ONE--MY MIND DOTH **WANDER**. THOU WERT SAYING--?

IF THE LADY SIF MAY BE SO **BOLD**, MY LORD--

--I DO THINK 'TIS TIME THOU DIDST **SHOW** ME THIS WORLD--

AND FOR THAT PURPOSE HAVE I TAKEN THESE **CLOTHES**--WHICH THE BUTLER JARVIS SAID DO BELONG TO THY FELLOW **AVENGER**--

--**THE SCARLET WITCH**.

THEY FIT THEE **WELL**, SIF...

...AND PERHAPS THOU ART **CORRECT**. TOO LONG HATH **THOR** SAT MUSING HERE...

...MAYHAP 'TIS TIME FOR **ANOTHER** TO TAKE HIS PLACE...

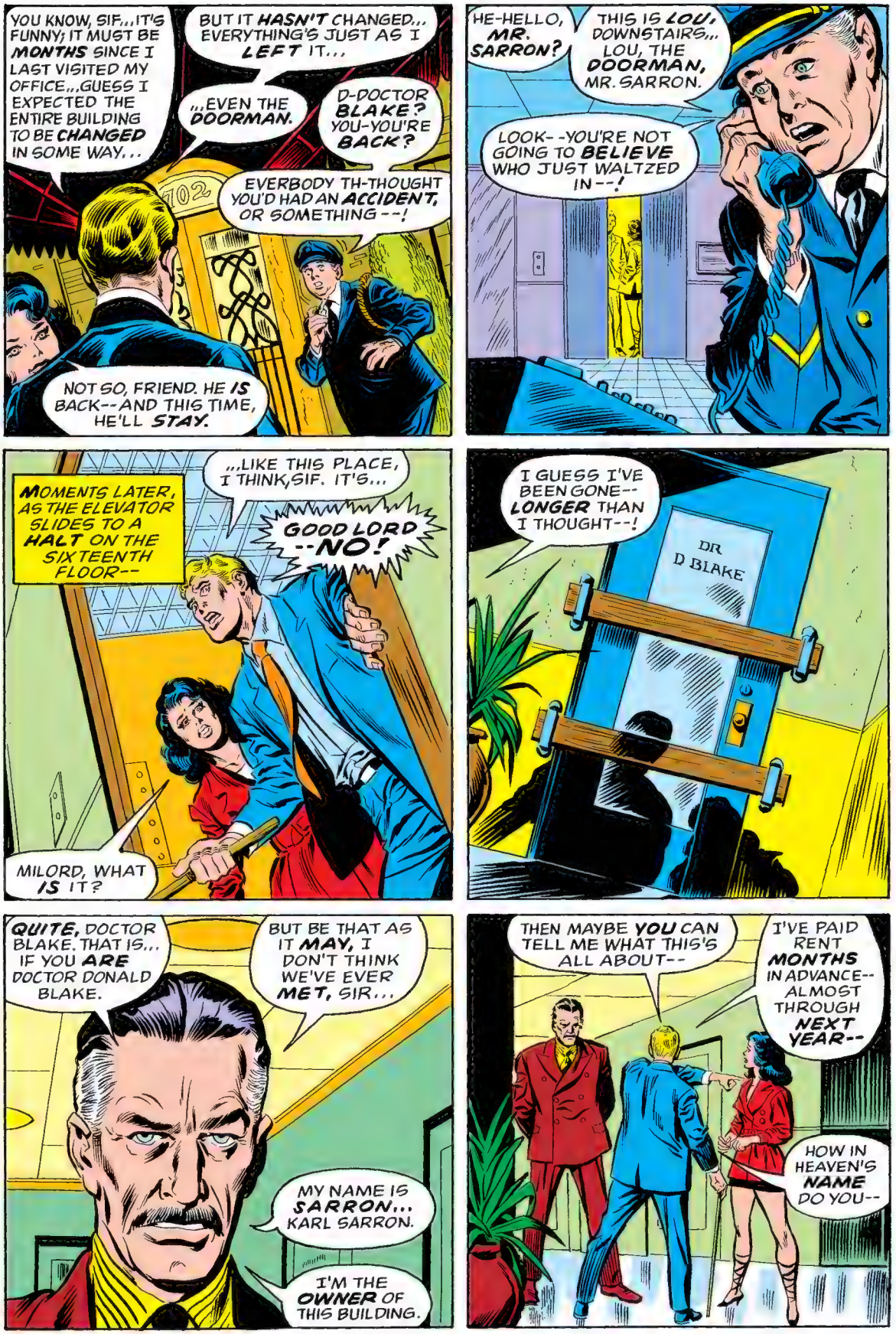
...ANOTHER, MORE **SUITED** TO THIS LAND...

...THE THUNDER GOD'S **HUMAN** ALTER EGO...

...**DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE!**

SOON, SEVERAL BLOCKS SOUTH AND EAST, TWO MORE **PEDESTRIANS** JOIN THE CITY'S FLOW...ONE WALKING TALL, PROUD...THE OTHER WITH A SLIGHT, BARELY NOTICEABLE **LIMP**...

...AND ON THE **LATTER** OF THESE TWO, STERN FEATURES SLOWLY LOOSEN...RELAX...AND FORM A **SMILE**...


YOU KNOW, SIF,,,IT'S FUNNY; IT MUST BE MONTHS SINCE I LAST VISITED MY OFFICE,,,GUESS I EXPECTED THE ENTIRE BUILDING TO BE CHANGED IN SOME WAY...
BUT IT HASN'T CHANGED,,, EVERYTHING'S JUST AS I LEFT IT...
,,,EVEN THE DOORMAN.
D-DOCTOR BLAKE? YOU-YOU'RE BACK?
EVERBODY TH-THOUGHT YOU'D HAD AN ACCIDENT, OR SOMETHING--!
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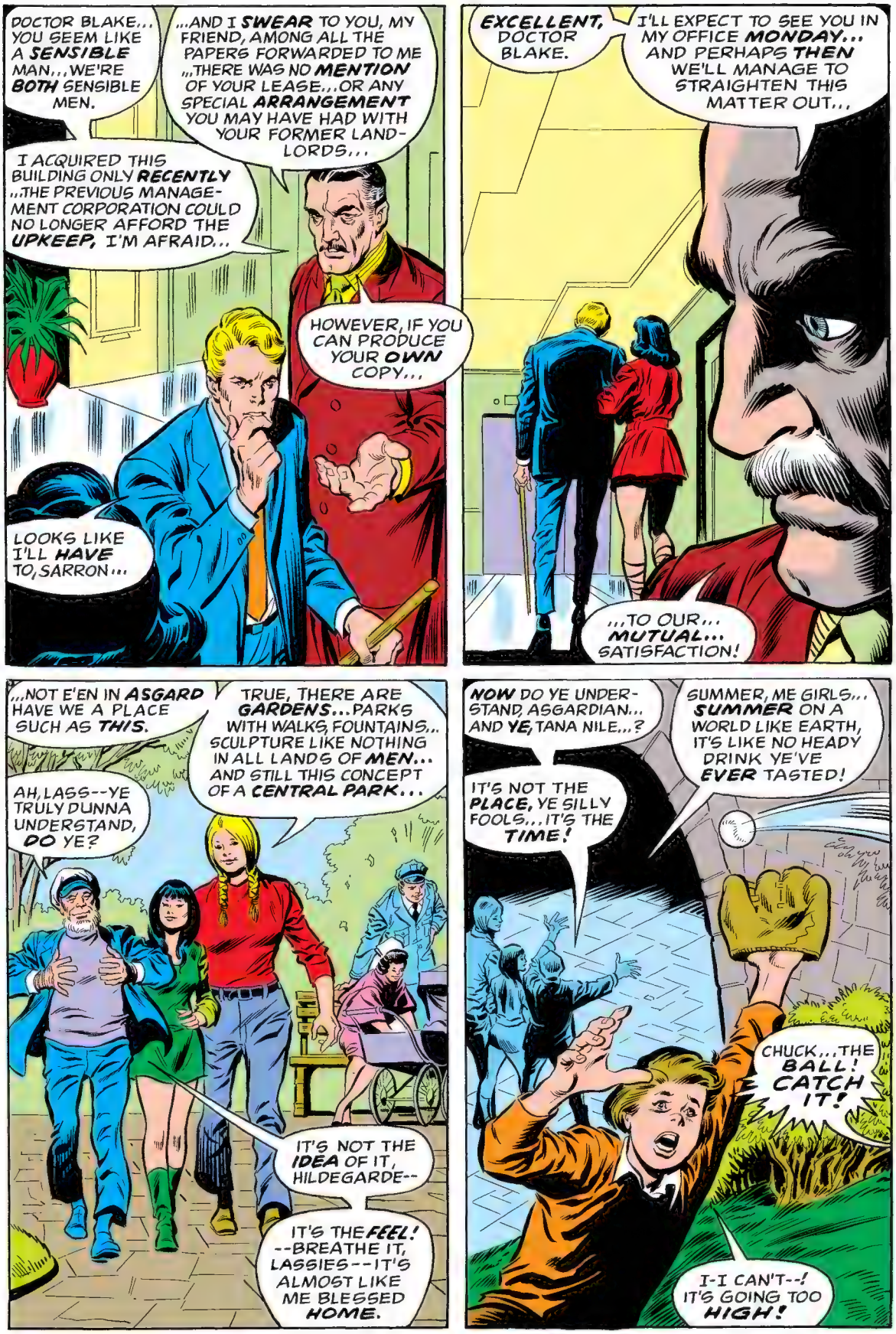
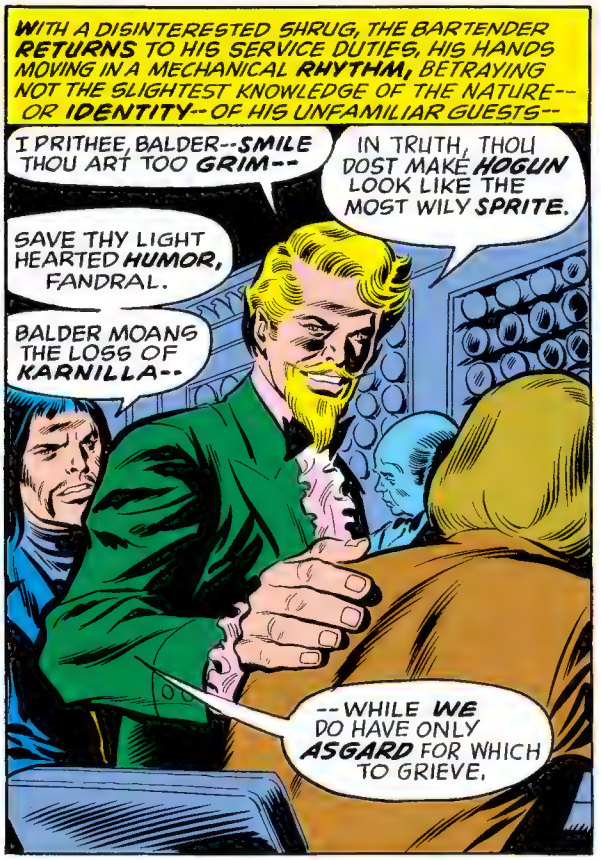
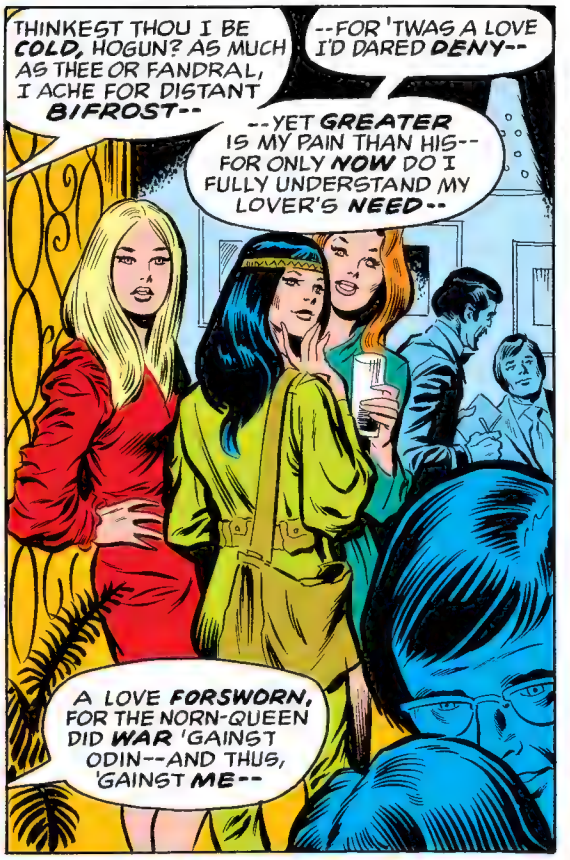
NOT SO, FRIEND. HE IS BACK--AND THIS TIME, HE'LL STAY.
HE-HELLO, MR. SARRON?
THIS IS LOU, DOWNSTAIRS,,, LOU, THE DOORMAN, MR. SARRON.
LOOK--YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE WHO JUST WALTZED IN--!
MOMENTS LATER, AS THE ELEVATOR SLIDES TO A HALT ON THE SIXTEENTH FLOOR--
,,,LIKE THIS PLACE, I THINK,SIF. IT'S...
GOOD LORD --NO!
MILORD, WHAT IS IT?
I GUESS I'VE BEEN GONE--LONGER THAN I THOUGHT--!
DR D BLAKE
QUITE, DOCTOR BLAKE. THAT IS... IF YOU ARE DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE.
BUT BE THAT AS IT MAY, I DON'T THINK WE'VE EVER MET, SIR...
MY NAME IS SARRON... KARL SARRON.
I'M THE OWNER OF THIS BUILDING.
THEN MAYBE YOU CAN TELL ME WHAT THIS'S ALL ABOUT--
I'VE PAID RENT MONTHS IN ADVANCE--ALMOST THROUGH NEXT YEAR--
HOW IN HEAVEN'S NAME DO YOU--

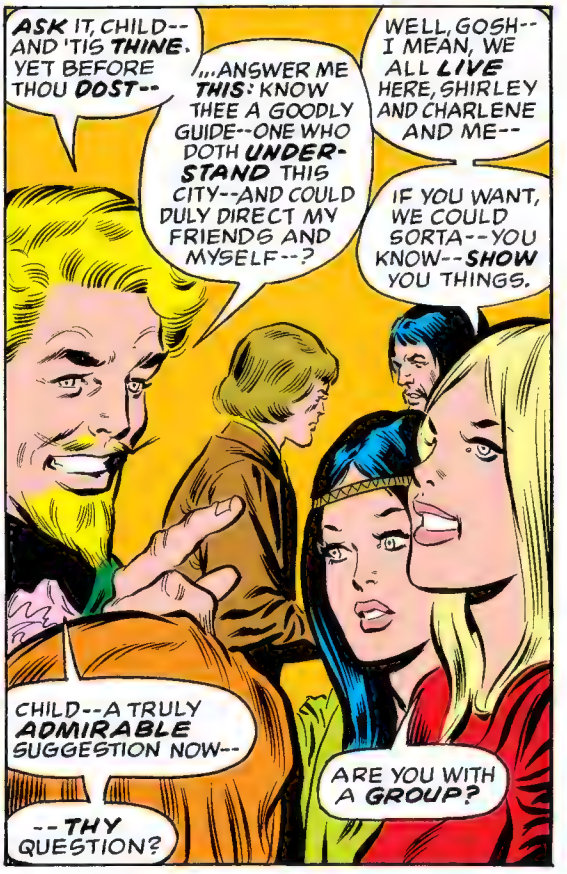

DOCTOR BLAKE... YOU SEEM LIKE A SENSIBLE MAN...WE'RE BOTH SENSIBLE MEN.
...AND I SWEAR TO YOU, MY FRIEND, AMONG ALL THE PAPERS FORWARDED TO ME ...THERE WAS NO MENTION OF YOUR LEASE...OR ANY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT YOU MAY HAVE HAD WITH YOUR FORMER LANDLORDS...
I ACQUIRED THIS BUILDING ONLY RECENTLY ...THE PREVIOUS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION COULD NO LONGER AFFORD THE UPKEEP, I'M AFRAID...
HOWEVER, IF YOU CAN PRODUCE YOUR OWN COPY...
LOOKS LIKE I'LL HAVE TO, SARRON...
EXCELLENT, DOCTOR BLAKE.
I'LL EXPECT TO SEE YOU IN MY OFFICE MONDAY... AND PERHAPS THEN WE'LL MANAGE TO STRAIGHTEN THIS MATTER OUT...
...TO OUR... MUTUAL... SATISFACTION!
...NOT E'EN IN ASGARD HAVE WE A PLACE SUCH AS THIS.
TRUE, THERE ARE GARDENS...PARKS WITH WALKS, FOUNTAINS... SCULPTURE LIKE NOTHING IN ALL LANDS OF MEN... AND STILL THIS CONCEPT OF A CENTRAL PARK...
AH, LASS--YE TRULY DUNNA UNDERSTAND, DO YE?
IT'S NOT THE IDEA OF IT, HILDEGARDE--
IT'S THE FEEL! --BREATHE IT, LASSIES--IT'S ALMOST LIKE ME BLESSED HOME.
NOW DO YE UNDERSTAND, ASGARDIAN... AND YE, TANA NILE...?
IT'S NOT THE PLACE, YE SILLY FOOLS...IT'S THE TIME!
SUMMER, ME GIRLS... SUMMER ON A WORLD LIKE EARTH, IT'S LIKE NO HEADY DRINK YE'VE EVER TASTED!
CHUCK...THE BALL! CATCH IT!
I-I CAN'T--! IT'S GOING TOO HIGH!

OH, CRUMBS!
HEY, MISTER--HEY, COULD YOU GET THE BALL?
AYE, LAD--I'LL FETCH IT FOR YE, THE DAYS TOO FINE FOR WALKIN'!
THESE BONES AIN'T SO OLD AS THEY SEEM, EH, LASSIES?
GEE, SIR--I SURE APPRECIATE THIS.
I MEAN, MOST OLD GUYS YELL AT YA, Y'KNOW WHAT I--
--MEAN?
THE THREE OF 'EM WENT IN THERE--I SAW THEM GO IN--
--AN IF THEY DIDN'T COME OUT--
--THEN WHERE DID THEY GO?
B-BUT--IF THEY WENT IN--THEN HOWCUM THEY DIDN'T COME OUT--?
--DRINKS FOR THREE, MY FRIEND.
THY FINEST ALE--AND, METHINKS, A TASTE OF THAT FELLOW'S MEAD--!
Y'WANT A WHITE RUSSIAN?
OKAY, MISTER --IT'S YOUR FUNERAL.
YEA, BARKEEP --I AGREE.

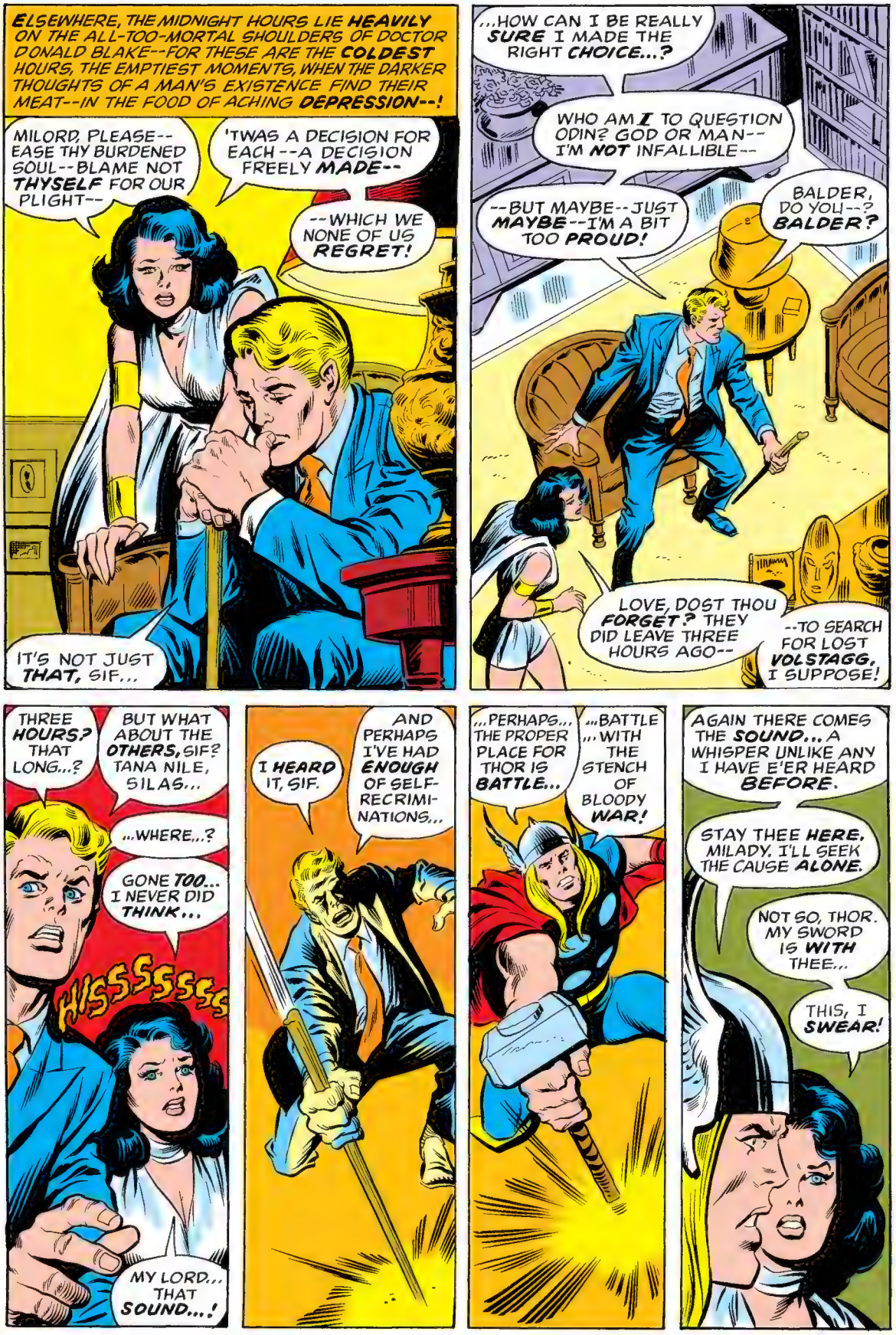

WITH A DISINTERESTED SHRUG, THE BARTENDER RETURNS TO HIS SERVICE DUTIES, HIS HANDS MOVING IN A MECHANICAL RHYTHM, BETRAYING NOT THE SLIGHTEST KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATURE--OR IDENTITY--OF HIS UNFAMILIAR GUESTS--
I PRITHEE, BALDER--SMILE THOU ART TOO GRIM--
IN TRUTH, THOU DOST MAKE HOGUN LOOK LIKE THE MOST WILY SPRITE.
SAVE THY LIGHT HEARTED HUMOR, FANDRAL.
BALDER MOANS THE LOSS OF KARNILLA--
--WHILE WE DO HAVE ONLY ASGARD FOR WHICH TO GRIEVE.


THINKEST THOU I BE COLD, HOGUN? AS MUCH AS THEE OR FANDRAL, I ACHE FOR DISTANT BIFROST--
--FOR 'TWAS A LOVE I'D DARED DENY--
--YET GREATER IS MY PAIN THAN HIS--FOR ONLY NOW DO I FULLY UNDERSTAND MY LOVER'S NEED--
A LOVE FORSWORN, FOR THE NORN-QUEEN DID WAR 'GAINST ODIN--AND THUS, 'GAINST ME--

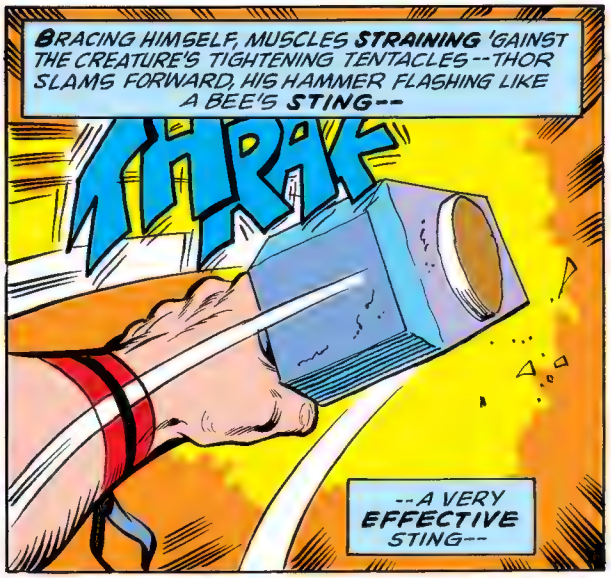
--A WAR NOW SEEMINGLY OVER, THOUGH REPLACED BY STILL ANOTHER--
--ONE I WAGE--A WAR, WITH MY OWN NOBLE LIEGE!
AS DO WE ALL, BALDER--YET WE STILL DO LIVE, AND--EH?
MAY WE AID THEE, MILADIES?
GOSH, I HOPE SO...!

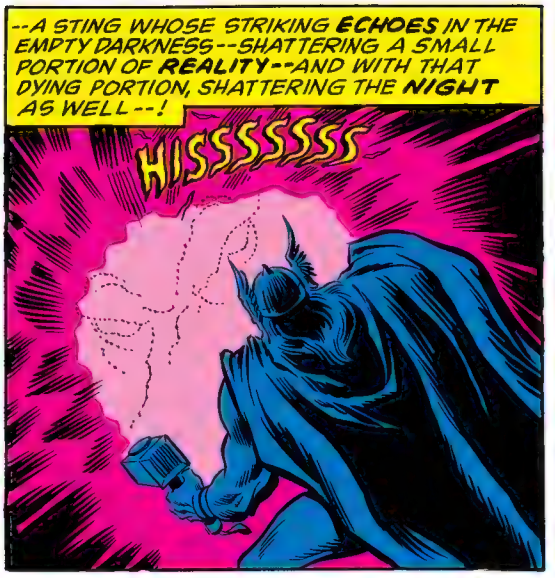

ASK IT, CHILD--AND 'TIS THINE. YET BEFORE THOU DOST--
...ANSWER ME THIS: KNOW THEE A GOODLY GUIDE--ONE WHO DOTH UNDERSTAND THIS CITY--AND COULD DULY DIRECT MY FRIENDS AND MYSELF--?
WELL, GOSH--I MEAN, WE ALL LIVE HERE, SHIRLEY AND CHARLENE AND ME--
IF YOU WANT, WE COULD SORTA--YOU KNOW--SHOW YOU THINGS.
CHILD--A TRULY ADMIRABLE SUGGESTION NOW--
--THY QUESTION?
ARE YOU WITH A GROUP?

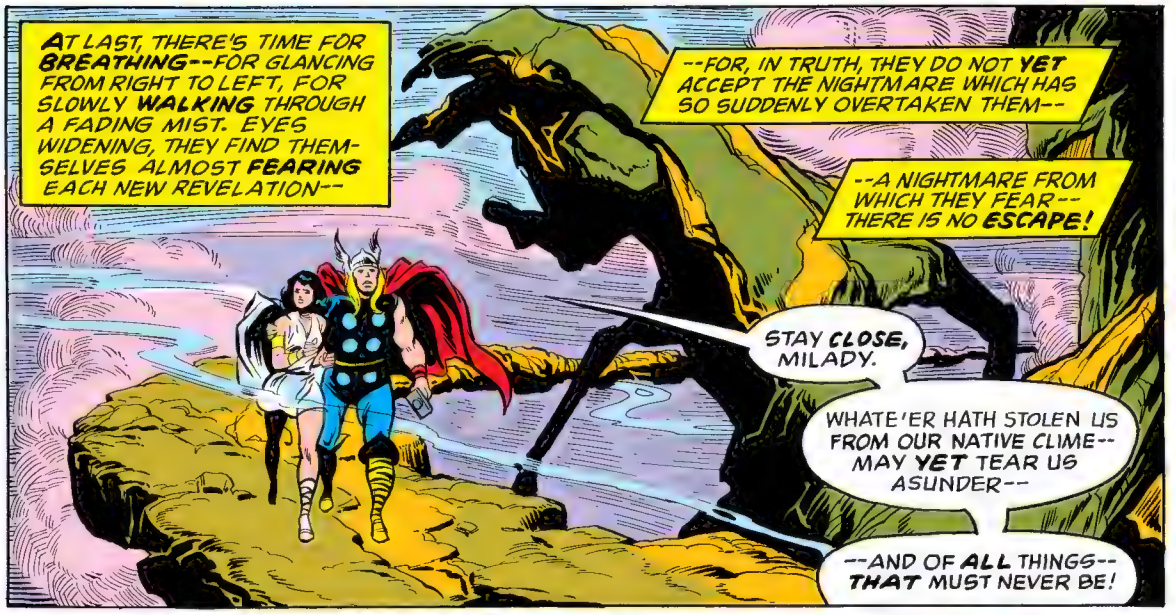
A GROUP? MINSTRELS...?
MY FRIENDS--?
I FEAR NOT, MILADY--BUT MY FRIENDS AND I--
FROWNING, HIS EYES FLASHING ANNOYANCE, THE ASGARDIAN GUARDSMAN EXCUSES HIMSELF WITH A NOD, LONG STRIDES CARRYING HIM OUTSIDE, INTO THE DEEPENING TWILIGHT...
EYEBROWS RAISED, HE WONDERS--HAS HE GONE TOO FAR, THIS TIME? A HARMLESS SHAM, HAS HIS ACT BECOME MORE THAN THAT--CAUSING ANGER INSTEAD OF LAUGHTER--?
HE BEGINS TO CALL OUT--
--AND CHOKES-- STUNNED!
BY ODIN'S SILVER BEARD--
GONE!
FOR AN INSTANT, FANDRAL STARES, SPEECHLESS--THEN, HE LUNGES--
--AND AS HE STEPS FROM LIGHT TO SHADOW, HE FEELS A SUDDEN, EERIE CHILL--
--A CHILL WHICH ENGULFS HIM--
--GRASPS HIM--
--AND, LIKE A THING ALIVE-- JERKS HIM AWAY!

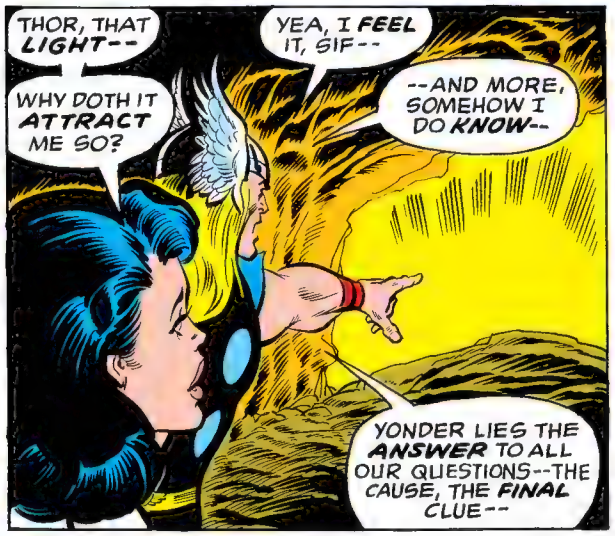

ELSEWHERE, THE MIDNIGHT HOURS LIE HEAVILY ON THE ALL-TOO-MORTAL SHOULDERS OF DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE--FOR THESE ARE THE COLDEST HOURS, THE EMPTIEST MOMENTS, WHEN THE DARKER THOUGHTS OF A MAN'S EXISTENCE FIND THEIR MEAT--IN THE FOOD OF ACHING DEPRESSION--!
MILORD, PLEASE-- EASE THY BURDENED SOUL--BLAME NOT THYSELF FOR OUR PLIGHT--
'TWAS A DECISION FOR EACH--A DECISION FREELY MADE--
--WHICH WE NONE OF US REGRET!
IT'S NOT JUST THAT, SIF...
...HOW CAN I BE REALLY SURE I MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE...?
WHO AM I TO QUESTION ODIN? GOD OR MAN-- I'M NOT INFALLIBLE--
--BUT MAYBE--JUST MAYBE--I'M A BIT TOO PROUD!
BALDER, DO YOU--? BALDER?
LOVE, DOST THOU FORGET? THEY DID LEAVE THREE HOURS AGO--
--TO SEARCH FOR LOST VOLSTAGG, I SUPPOSE!
THREE HOURS? THAT LONG...?
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS, SIF? TANA NILE, SILAS...
...WHERE...?
GONE TOO... I NEVER DID THINK...
HISSSSSSS
MY LORD... THAT SOUND...!
I HEARD IT, SIF.
AND PERHAPS I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF SELF-RECRIMINATIONS...
...PERHAPS... THE PROPER PLACE FOR THOR IS BATTLE...
...BATTLE ...WITH THE STENCH OF BLOODY WAR!
AGAIN THERE COMES THE SOUND... A WHISPER UNLIKE ANY I HAVE E'ER HEARD BEFORE.
STAY THEE HERE, MILADY. I'LL SEEK THE CAUSE ALONE.
NOT SO, THOR. MY SWORD IS WITH THEE...
THIS, I SWEAR!

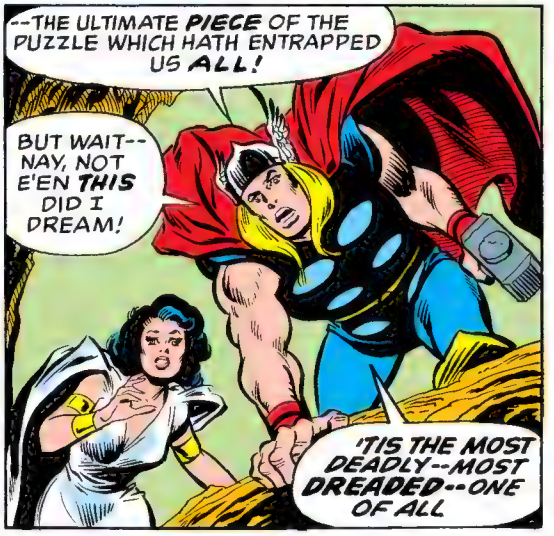
THEN COME!
THOU AT LEAST MUST KNOW THY MIND... AND 'TIS NOT THOR'S PLACE TO CHANGE IT--!
BUT HOLD, SIF! AHEAD, THE LIGHTS DO GROW DIM...
SSSSSSSSSSSSS
...WHAT MADNESS IS THIS...?
ODIN'S BLOOD!
GET THEE BACK, MILADY-- THE DARKNESS ATTACKS US!
TOO LATE, MY LOVE--WHATE'ER FORCE IT BE, IT DOTH SWALLOW ME ALSO!
THEN WE BOTH ARE DOOMED--
THE DARKNESS DOTH SPIN AND WHIRL-- AND IN IT, ALL SPACE DOTH SWIFTLY DISSOLVE--!
HISSSSSSS
--AND AHEAD-- LOOMING OUT THE MISTS--
--THE SOURCE OF SOUND AND FORCE ALIKE--
--A DEMON-HOUND OF HELL!
HHHISSSSSSS
OF HELL--OR WORSE, METHINKS!
HIS SSSSSSSSSS
IT DOTH EYE US SILENTLY, MY LADY... YET I SENSE A CERTAIN TENSION IN ITS GRASP--
--AND EVEN AS WE DO SPEAK--
--THE CREATURE DOTH ACT!


BRACING HIMSELF, MUSCLES STRAINING 'GAINST THE CREATURE'S TIGHTENING TENTACLES--THOR SLAMS FORWARD, HIS HAMMER FLASHING LIKE A BEE'S STING--
THRAK
--A VERY EFFECTIVE STING--


--A STING WHOSE STRIKING ECHOES IN THE EMPTY DARKNESS--SHATTERING A SMALL PORTION OF REALITY--AND WITH THAT DYING PORTION, SHATTERING THE NIGHT AS WELL--!
HISSSSSSS


AT LAST, THERE'S TIME FOR BREATHING--FOR GLANCING FROM RIGHT TO LEFT, FOR SLOWLY WALKING THROUGH A FADING MIST. EYES WIDENING, THEY FIND THEMSELVES ALMOST FEARING EACH NEW REVELATION--
--FOR, IN TRUTH, THEY DO NOT YET ACCEPT THE NIGHTMARE WHICH HAS SO SUDDENLY OVERTAKEN THEM--
--A NIGHTMARE FROM WHICH THEY FEAR--THERE IS NO ESCAPE!
STAY CLOSE, MILADY.
WHATE'ER HATH STOLEN US FROM OUR NATIVE CLIME--MAY YET TEAR US ASUNDER--
--AND OF ALL THINGS--THAT MUST NEVER BE!


THOR, THAT LIGHT--
YEA, I FEEL IT, SIF--
WHY DOTH IT ATTRACT ME SO?
--AND MORE, SOMEHOW I DO KNOW--
YONDER LIES THE ANSWER TO ALL OUR QUESTIONS--THE CAUSE, THE FINAL CLUE--


--THE ULTIMATE PIECE OF THE PUZZLE WHICH HATH ENTRAPPED US ALL!
BUT WAIT--NAY, NOT E'EN THIS DID I DREAM!
'TIS THE MOST DEADLY--MOST DREADED--ONE OF ALL

...MEPHISTO!

WELCOME, THUNDER GOD--

AS YOU CAN NO DOUBT SEE--

--WE HAVE BEEN EXPECTING YOU!!

NEXT ISSUE THE HOUNDS OF HADES!

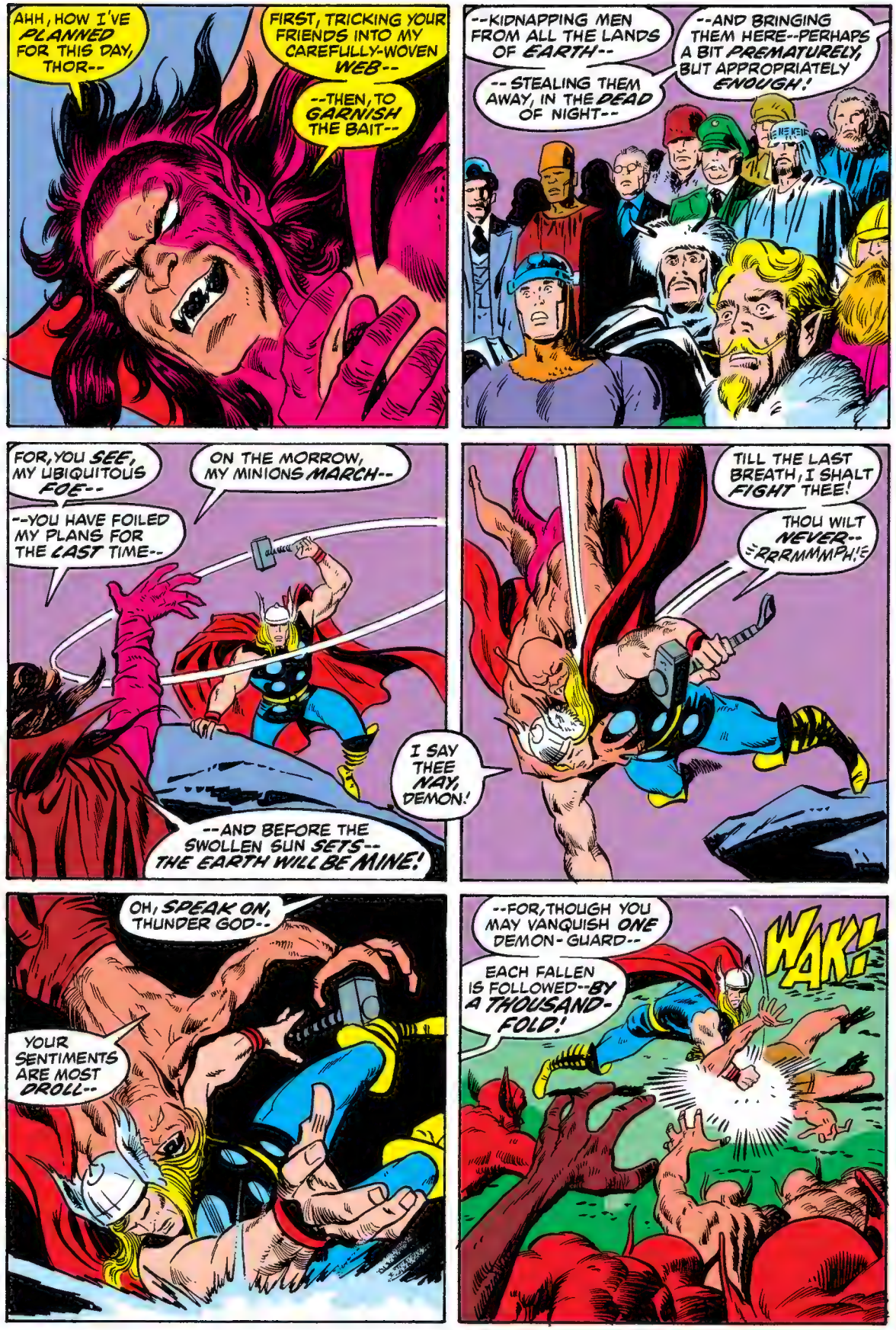
THOR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP™
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
20¢ 205 NOV 02450
THE MIGHTY
THOR®
SLAY HIM, MY CHILDREN! THIS DAY, THOR DIES--
--BY THE HAND OF THOSE WHO LOVE HIM!!
THE MARK OF MEPHISTO!

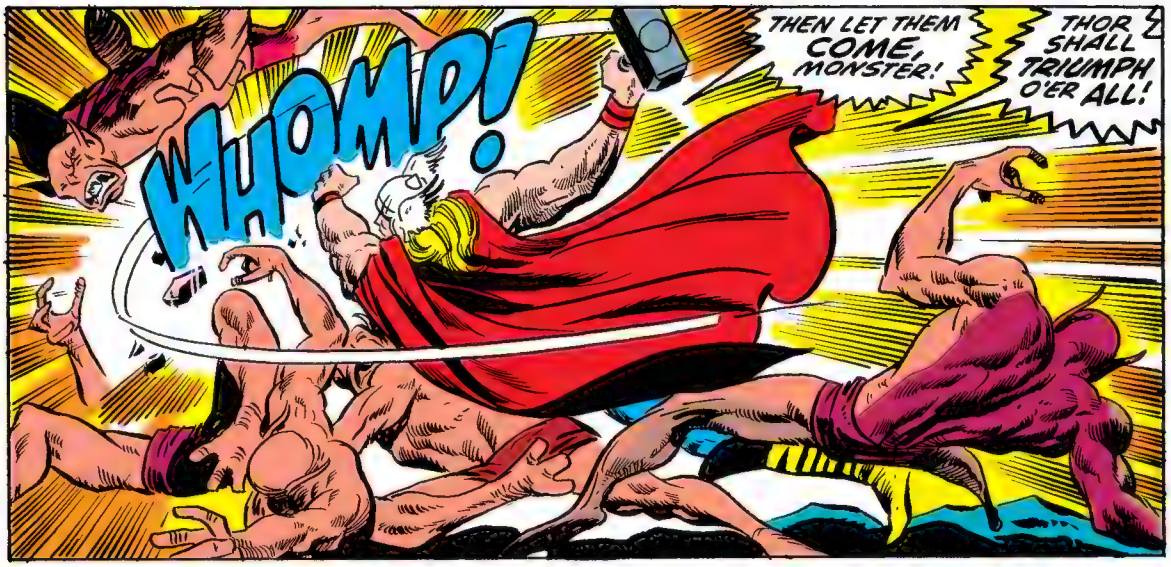
THE MIGHTY THOR!™

A WORLD GONE MAD!

THAT IS WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, ISN'T IT, THOR? A COSMOS CAST INTO CHAOS--
--A UNIVERSE WITHOUT REASON OR RHYME! YES, I SEE IT IN YOUR EYES, MY QUAINT AND MORAL ASGARDIAN--
YOU FEAR MY LAND AS I DO YOURS--
--A LAND YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND-- A WORLD WHERE YOUR PRETTY CONSCIOUS HAS NO MEANING!
WELCOME TO HELL, THUNDER GOD!
&
WELCOME TO THE LAND-- OF MEPHISTO!

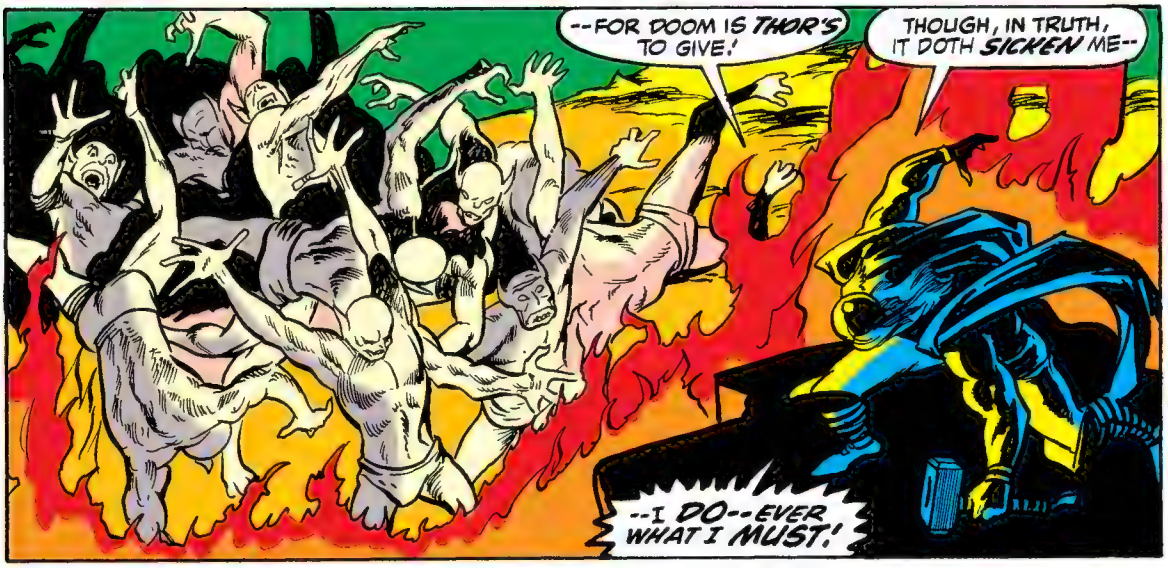
STAN LEE PRESENTS: 1024 z | GERRY CONWAY, SCRIPTER & JOHN BUSCEMA ARTIST | VINNIE COLLETTA, INKER | JOHN COSTANZA, LETTERER | ROY THOMAS, EDITOR


AHH, HOW I'VE PLANNED FOR THIS DAY, THOR--
FIRST, TRICKING YOUR FRIENDS INTO MY CAREFULLY-WOVEN WEB--
--THEN, TO GARNISH THE BAIT--
--KIDNAPPING MEN FROM ALL THE LANDS OF EARTH--
--AND BRINGING THEM HERE--PERHAPS A BIT PREMATURELY, BUT APPROPRIATELY ENOUGH!
-- STEALING THEM AWAY, IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT--
FOR, YOU SEE, MY UBIQUITOUS FOE--
ON THE MORROW, MY MINIONS MARCH--
--YOU HAVE FOILED MY PLANS FOR THE LAST TIME--
I SAY THEE NAY, DEMON!
--AND BEFORE THE SWOLLEN SUN SETS-- THE EARTH WILL BE MINE!
TILL THE LAST BREATH, I SHALT FIGHT THEE!
THOU WILT NEVER-- =RRRMMMPH!=
OH, SPEAK ON, THUNDER GOD--
YOUR SENTIMENTS ARE MOST DROLL--
--FOR, THOUGH YOU MAY VANQUISH ONE DEMON-GUARD--
EACH FALLEN IS FOLLOWED--BY A THOUSAND-FOLD!
WAK!


WHOMP!
THEN LET THEM COME, MONSTER!
THOR SHALL TRIUMPH O'ER ALL!

YOU FLATTER YOURSELF, THUNDER GOD... AND TRULY, YOU INSULT ME.
DID YOU THINK I'D LET THIS MOMENT ARRIVE UNPREPARED? LOOK TO THE SOUTH, NOBLE ASGARDIAN...
LOOK TO THE SOUTH... AND SEE YOUR DOOM!

NOT ALL THE HORDES OF HELL--
NOT THEE OR ANY DEMIGOD--
THWAK!
-- CAN DRAG ME TO MY DOOM--

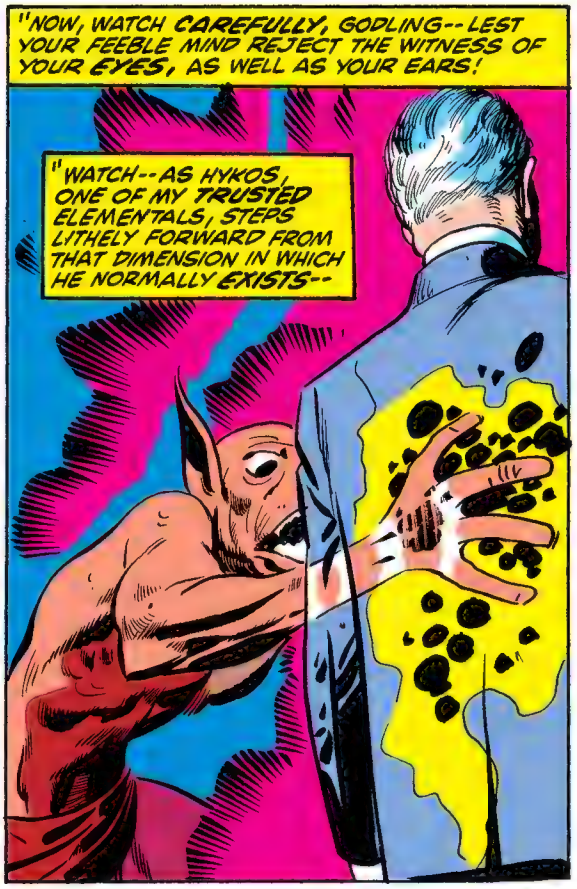

--FOR DOOM IS THOR'S TO GIVE!
THOUGH, IN TRUTH, IT DOTH SICKEN ME--
--I DO--EVER WHAT I MUST!

BRILLIANT, ASGARDIAN... YOUR SPIRIT ASTOUNDS ME.
IT'S TIME, I THINK, TO TALK--
--AND WE'VE MUCH, I THINK-- TO TALK ABOUT.
BUT, BE NOT SHY, THOR... COME FORWARD, LOOK UPON YOUR FRIENDS!
THOUGH THEY GIVE NO SIGN, THEY KNOW YOU ARE HERE... I ASSURE YOU.
...WERE IT OTHERWISE, THERE WOULD BE NO PLEASURE IN THE IRONY!
PERHAPS YOU WONDER AT MY PURPOSE.
WONDER NO LONGER...
...FOR IN MERE MOMENTS, 'TWILL ALL BECOME QUITE APPARENT.
THOU DOST SEEK TO CONFUSE ME WITH WORDS, MEPHISTO...
THY TRICKS MEAN NAUGHT TO ME.
OH?
THAT GLADDENS ME, THUNDER GOD...
... FOR THEN WE SHALL BOTH FIND YOUR NEXT BATTLE...
...REVEALING.
BY ODIN'S BEARD--NO!
OH, YES, THUNDER GOD-- THE LADY SIF, HERSELF!
WHILE YOU BATTLED MINDLESSLY, MEPHISTO MOVED--
--AND NOW THE MOMENT COMES--FOR DECISION--
--FOR WHEN YOUR BELOVED STRIKES--
--SHE STRIKES FOR ME!
MILADY, I BEG THEE--

NAY, SHE ANSWERS NOT--BUT DOTH SWING THIS SLASHING AXE INSTEAD
TRULY THOU HAST STOLEN HER VERY MIND, MEPHISTO--
--BUT IF THOU DOST HOPE TO MAKE ME CAUSE A DEEPER BETRAYAL--
--TO STRIKE AGAINST THE WOMAN I TRULY LOVE--AND SO BETRAY MYSELF--
THEN THINK THEE AGAIN, VILLAIN!
THERE BE OTHER MEANS TO AN END--
--AND I SHALL USE THOSE MEANS--
--AND FIGHT THEE TILL THIS COWARDLY SPELL HATH PASSED--
YEA, UNTO THE VERY END OF TIME!
SO IT WOULD APPEAR, ASGARDIAN.
SO IT WOULD APPEAR.
VERY WELL, THEN...YOU SHALL HAVE YOUR MINOR VICTORY.
IT MEANS NAUGHT... FOR THE GREATEST BATTLE IS YET TO COME...
...AND THAT, MY ARROGANT PUP, YOU SHALL NEVER WIN!

WE'LL SEE TO THAT WHEN THE MOMENT DOTH ARRIVE, MEPHISTO.
FOR THE NOUNCE, I AM SATISFIED...
MILADY DOTH SLEEP.
AND SHE WILL CONTINUE TO SLUMBER, THOR...
...AND WILL ONLY WAKE...WHEN THE WORLD ABOVE IS MINE.
OR WHEN THOU ART DESTROYED, MONSTER.
THE MORE LIKELY, METHINKS.
AH, FOOLISH, FOOLISH IMMORTAL!
YOU DO NOT YET UNDERSTAND, DO YOU, THOR?
THESE MEN MY DEMONS KIDNAPPED--
YOU THINK THEM INNOCENT-- VICTIMS IN A COSMIC SCHEME?
LOOK AGAIN, GODLING-- NOT VICTIMS, BUT PAWNS--
PAWNS? THOU DOST HINT AT DARKER THINGS, DEMON--
SPEAK CLEARLY-- AND IF THOU DOST MEAN WHAT I THINK THOU DOST MEAN--
OH, BUT I DO SPEAK CLEARLY, THUNDER GOD--
--WORDS WHICH WILL FIND CLARITY IN ACTION--
--YOU BUT REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE TRUTH OF MY WORDS--

..SO!


"NOW, WATCH CAREFULLY, GODLING--LEST YOUR FEEBLE MIND REJECT THE WITNESS OF YOUR EYES, AS WELL AS YOUR EARS!
"WATCH--AS HYKOS, ONE OF MY TRUSTED ELEMENTALS, STEPS LITHELY FORWARD FROM THAT DIMENSION IN WHICH HE NORMALLY EXISTS--

"DO YOU SEE, THUNDER GOD--DO YOU OBSERVE, AS HIS BODY SEEMS TO DISSOLVE--TO MELT AND REFORM, SUBTLY ALTERED BY THE FORCE OF MEPHISTO'S ALL-ENCOMPASSING POWER--
"--REFORMING INSIDE THE MORTAL'S HAPLESS SHELL, BECOMING--IN TERRIBLE EFFECT--A PART OF THAT SHELL--

"--UNTIL SHELL AND GUIDING DEMON ARE JOINED--INEXTRICABLY, TOTALLY, AND ALL-PERVASIVELY ONE!"
AS YOU WISHED, MASTER--IT IS DONE.
HYKOS IS YOURS TO COMMAND!

HYKOS, YOU ARE A CONSTANT PLEASURE TO ME... AS USUAL, YOUR PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN QUITE SUPERLATIVE.
AND NOW, HYKOS... I WANT YOU TO MEET SOMEONE...
...A FUTILE LITTLE IMMORTAL WHO THINKS HE HAS THE POWER AND THE WILL TO DEFEAT ME!!
NONE WILL DEFEAT MEPHISTO--
HYKOS WILL SEE TO THAT!
THOU ART THE MOST DIABOLICAL OF CREATURES, MONSTER--
I SEE THY PLAN-- AN ARMY OF THESE TRANSFORMED MORTALS--
--SPIES FROM WITHIN THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE!
'TIS A PLAN FOUL IN ITS CONCEPTION--
--EVIL IN ITS INCARNATION--
--AND DOOMED IN ITS FUNCTION!
ON THE CONTRARY, THUNDER GOD--
EVEN AS THESE SHEETS OF FLAME TURN YOUR HAND ASIDE--
--SO WILL THE IMAGE OF THE FAMILIAR, THE MUNDANE-- THE ORDINARY-- BLUNT THE FORCE OF MORTAL HEROES!
FOR, TELL ME, THOR-- WHAT WEAKLING MAN WOULD FIGHT A FRIEND-- A WIFE--A HUSBAND?
WOULD HE NOT DIE FIRST?
IF YOU THINK NOT-- THEN LOOK BELOW--

"--AND TELL ME YOU WILL STRIKE BLOW FOR BLOW, WOUND FOR WOUND-- AGAINST THOSE YOU CALL COMPANIONS--AND FRIENDS!"
LIKE INSENTIENT AUTOMATONS, THE BEDEVILED ASGARDIAN GUARDSMEN STEP FORWARD FROM THE MISTY SHADOWS--
HOGUN, FANDRAL, BALDER--EVEN THE ONCE-VERBOSE VOLSTAGG-- ALL APPROACH, THEIR SIGHTLESS EYES BETRAYING GRIM INTENT--
--AN INTENT GIVEN SILENT VOICE--IN ATTACK!
SNAK!
BRAVE BALDER-- EVEN THEE?
BE NONE BUT THOR IMMUNE--?
--OR HAVE I BEEN SPARED TO SUFFER GREATER TORMENTS?
YEA, I SEE IT NOW--
WHEN E'EN COLD HOGUN DOTH TURN HIS MACE AGAINST ME--
WHUMP!

--WHAT RECOURSE HAVE I BUT DARK AND BITTER DESPAIR?
--FOR WHEN THOU DOST STEAL A MAN'S FRIEND--
VERILY THOU ART THE VILEST OF DEMONS, MEPHISTO--THOU DOST KNIFE TO THE VERY CORE OF MAN AND MORTAL--
--THOU DOST STEAL A PIECE OF THE MAN, AS WELL!
HOW UNFORTUNATE, THEN--THAT THY PLAN CAN ONLY FAIL!
KOOOSH HH!
DIDST THOU TRULY BELIEVE I WOULD CORRUPT MY SOUL WITH ANGUISH?
THAT I WOULD MAKE VIOLENCE AGAINST THOSE WHO HOLD MY HEART'S AFFECTION?
THERE BE OTHER WAYS TO STILL THEIR HANDS--WAYS WITHOUT THE BRANDING GUILT OF CAUSING PAIN--
--AS, BY MEANS OF MJOLNIR'S STORM-SHACKLING POWER, I DO SURROUND THEM WITH A SPINNING VORTEX--
--AND SO TRANSPORT THEM TO A DISTANT, LONELY PEAK--
"WHERE OTHER OF THE HAMMER'S MANY SORCERIES CAUSE A HUNDRED-WEIGHT OF BOULDERS TO BE SUMMONED--

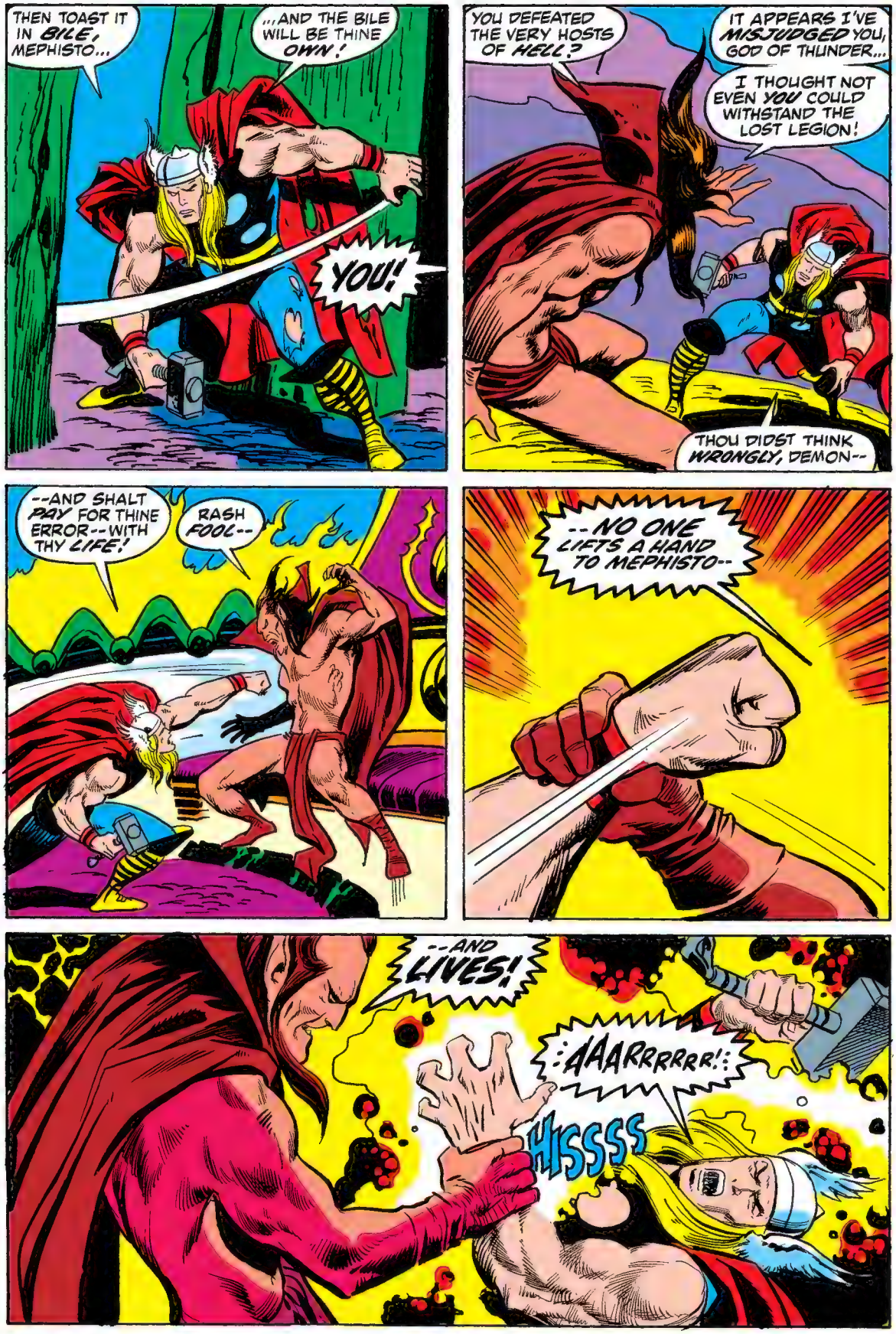
"WHICH SHALL SAFELY IMPRISON THEM-- AWAY FROM THEE--
--AND ME!
TOUCHING, THUNDER GOD... ALMOST, YOU MAKE ME COMPREHEND YOUR TIRELESS GRIEF.
THUS, I AM IN YOUR DEBT, ASGARDIAN...
...YOU MAKE IT SO MUCH EASIER FOR ME TO DESPISE YOU.
WHY, MONSTER?
BECAUSE I TRULY CARE-- BECAUSE THEIR PAIN IS MY PAIN?
BECAUSE THOU MAY NEVER KNOW SUCH BREADTH AND DEPTH OF FEELING--?
PERHAPS, THOR-- PERHAPS YOUR WEAKNESS DISGUSTS ME--
--PERHAPS WHAT YOU FIND NOBLE-- I FIND MERELY INTOLERABLE--
--AND FOR SUCH AS I, INTOLERANCE IS A LUXURY TO BE PAMPERED--

--JUST AS IT WAS PAMPERED-- BY THEM!
"DO YOU RECOGNIZE THEM, ASGARDIAN? ARE THEIR FEATURES FAMILIAR, THEIR NAMES A HATED CURSE? AYE-- THE GREATEST AND MOST INGENIOUS OF EARTH'S MANY VILLAINS--
"--TRAGIC FIGURES ALL, CONDEMNED --OR REWARDED -- BY AN UNCARING UNIVERSE WITH ETERNAL EXILE TO THIS NAMELESS LAND--
"--WHERE THEY ARE, OF COURSE, MY FAITHFUL SERVANTS--
"--AND I--THEIR WORSHIPPED MASTER!

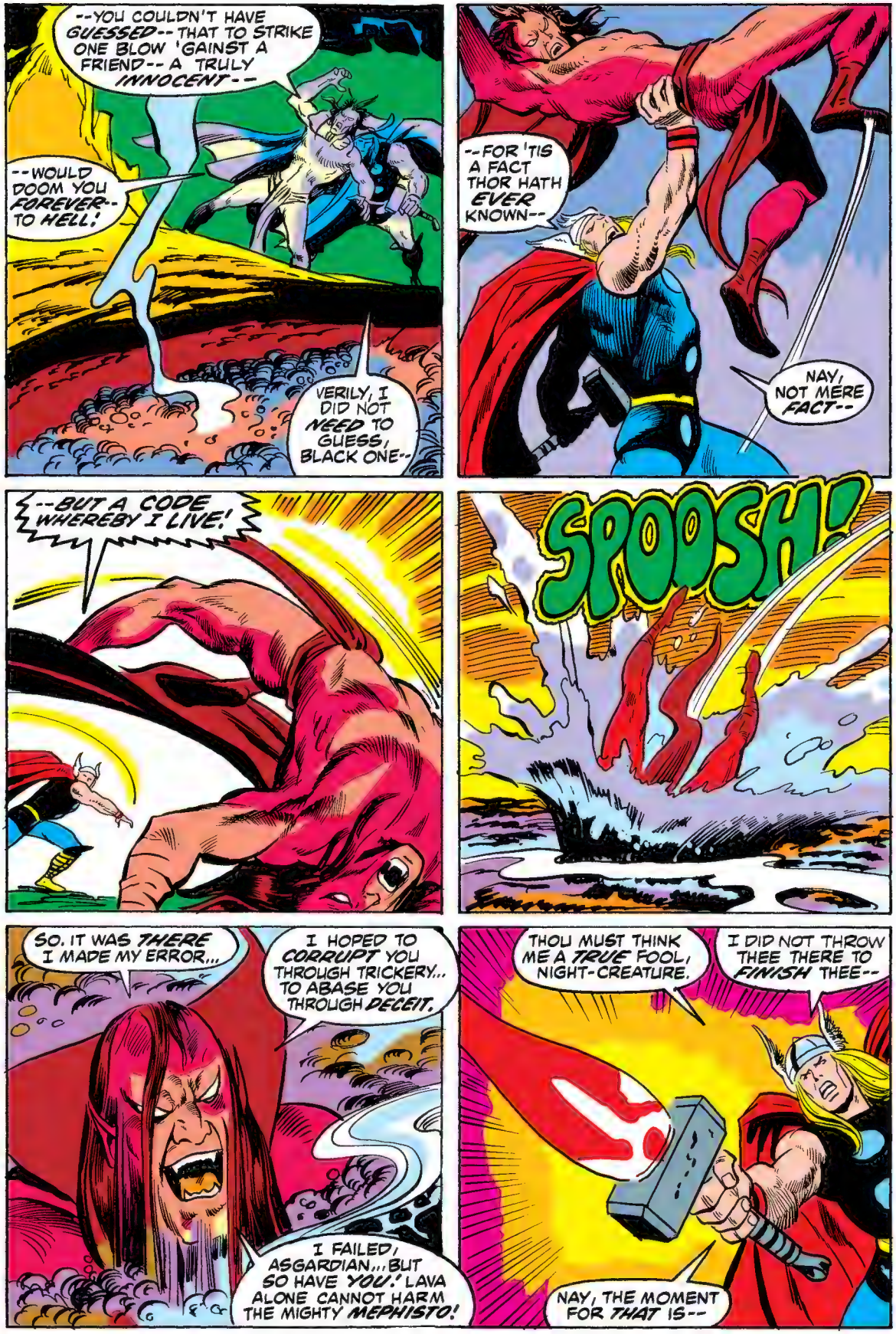
"DO YOU SEE NOW HOW HOPELESS YOUR BLIND PERSISTENCE TRULY IS, BLONDHAIR? NO? THEN OBSERVE-- FOR THE MOST EAGER OF MY SUBJECTS IS ANXIOUS TO BEGIN--
FORWARD, YOU FOOLS-- LET NOTHING STAND IN YOUR WAY--
"--AND HE IS A LEADER IN THE MATTER OF CRUELTY-- AND VIOLENT EFFICIENCY!"
ALL MUST BE CRUSHED--TRAMPLED-- IN THE NAME OF MEPHISTO!
KRAK!
AT LAST, I DO BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND, NIGHT-CREATURE--
YET BEFORE I MAY TEST THAT DAWNING COMPREHENSION, I MUST ACT--
KTOW!
SEEWWWW
BOK!
--AS ONLY THE THUNDER GOD MAY!
SPTANG!
YOU-- COMPREHEND? I DOUBT IT, THOR--
YOUR MIND IS TOO SIMPLE TO ABSORB MEPHISTO'S DIVINE COM-PLEXITY.
WE SHALL SEE, DEMON--
"--AS SOON AS I DO DISCERN YON NEW MENACE!
"EH? WHAT INFERNAL ENGINE--?"

A CANNON?
THY RESOURCES DO GROW MORE CRUDE WITH EACH NEW ASSAULT, MEPHISTO--
BADOOM!
--AND THOUGH THE THREAT SEEMS NO LESS DEADLY--
--'TIS FAR MORE EASILY DISPATCHED!
KRRAASSHH!
A SMALL VICTORY, MY FRIEND... ONE THAT SHALL COST YOU DEARLY.
I MEAN TO HAVE YOUR PLANET EARTH... AND I MEAN TO BREAK YOUR VAPID ARROGANCE...
...AND MOST OF ALL, I'LL HAVE YOUR SOUL!
THEN PREPARE THYSELF FOR THY MOST DEMANDING BATTLE, DEMON.
THOR FALLS NOT WITHOUT A FIGHT!

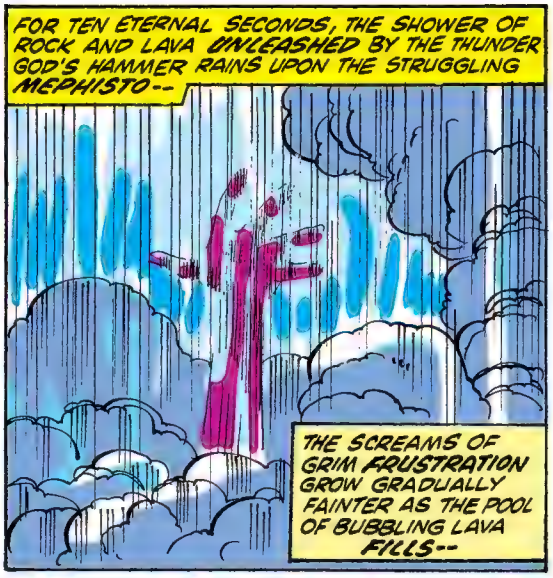
'TIS A MATTER OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE, GODLING!
THE LEGIONS OF THE LOST YEARN ALWAYS FOR THE TASTE OF KILLING...
...AND SEARCH ALWAYS FOR THE TORCH OF WAR!
LET THEM COME, MEPHISTO--FOR WHEN THE LAST GHOST DOTH FALL--
--SO ALSO SHALL MEPHISTO!
PERHAPS SO, THUNDER GOD.
WE SHALL SEE... SHALL WE NOT?
WITH THE ECHO OF HIS OWN WORDS RINGING IN HIS EARS, THE SON OF ODIN PRESSES ON-WARD--
--ONWARD, 'GAINST INCREASING ODDS--
--FOR, IN TRUTH, THE HOARD SEEMS INEXHAUSTABLE--
--WHILE EVEN THIS BATTLE-WEARY GOD OF THUNDER, UNFORTUNATELY--IS NOT!
MINUTES BECOME HOURS, UNTIL FINALLY...
THE SOUND OUTSIDE CEASES.
A PITY. SYKOS, BRING ME WINE... I WOULD TOAST THE GODLING'S DEFEAT.

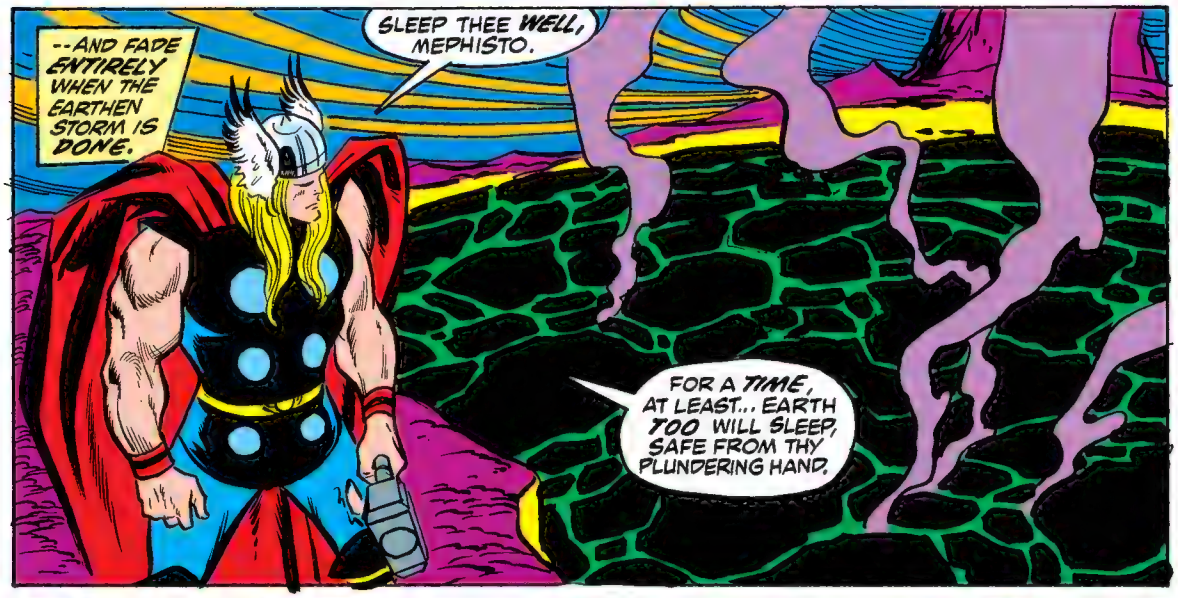

THEN TOAST IT IN BILE, MEPHISTO...
...AND THE BILE WILL BE THINE OWN!
YOU!
YOU DEFEATED THE VERY HOSTS OF HELL?
IT APPEARS I'VE MISJUDGED YOU, GOD OF THUNDER...
I THOUGHT NOT EVEN YOU COULD WITHSTAND THE LOST LEGION!
THOU DIDST THINK WRONGLY, DEMON--
--AND SHALT PAY FOR THINE ERROR--WITH THY LIFE!
RASH FOOL--
--NO ONE LIFTS A HAND TO MEPHISTO--
--AND LIVES!
:AAARRRRRR!:
HISSSS

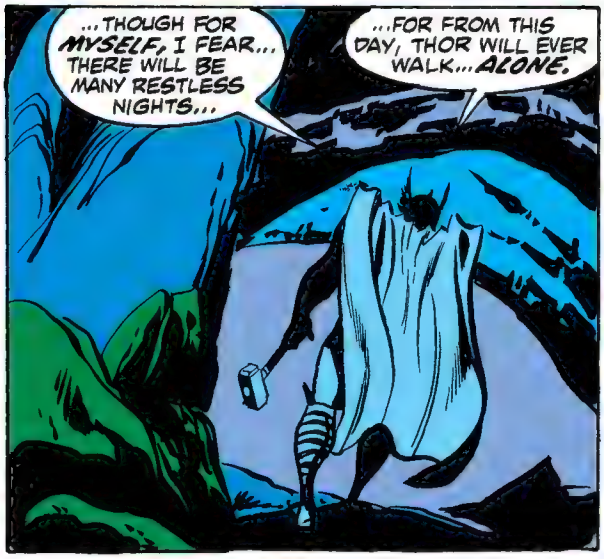
MY HAND--'TIS AS THOUGH IT IS AFIRE--
NEVER HAVE I FELT SUCH PAIN--SUCH INCREDIBLE AGONY!
AND YOU WILL FEEL GREATER AGONY, GODLING--
--SUFFERING SUCH AS NO MAN OR GOD HAS EVEN KNOWN--
--UNLESS YOU SAVE YOURSELF--BY SHIFTING ALLEGIANCE TO--MEPHISTO!
BETRAY MY LAND, MY LIFE--MY LORD?
ONLY ONE ANSWER MAY I GIVE--AND IT'S--
NEVER!
IT APPEARS MY SUSPICIONS WERE BASED ON TRUTH.
THOU DOST SEEK NOT MERELY TO KILL ME--
--BUT TO ENSLAVE YOU AS WELL!
HOW HOPELESSLY BRIGHT OF YOU, ASGARDIAN.
YES, BEFORE I CAN TRULY INVADE THE WORLD WITHOUT, I NEED ONE FINAL VICTORY--
--THE CORRUPTION OF THE MOST NOBLE OF SOULS--
THOR, GOD OF THUNDER!
THOU SHOULD HAVE PLANNED TO KILL ME FIRST, MEPHISTO--
--FOR THOR SHALL NE'ER FALL PREY TO THY BASE-TEMPTATIONS--
THUMP!
--TEMPTATIONS ALL THE MORE FOUL FOR THEIR INVISIBILITY!
YOU COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN--

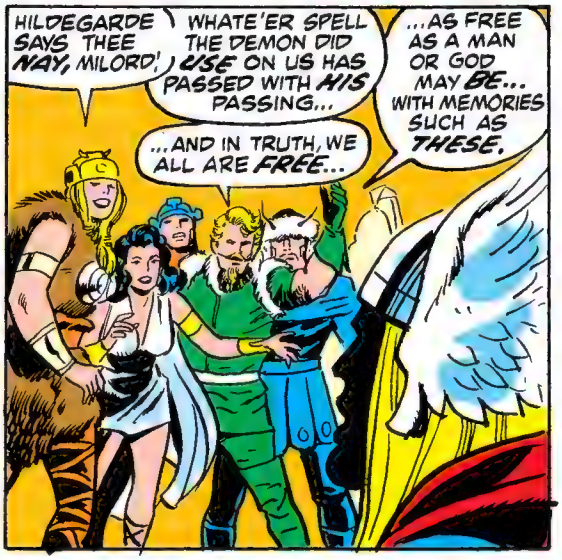

--YOU COULDN'T HAVE GUESSED-- THAT TO STRIKE ONE BLOW 'GAINST A FRIEND-- A TRULY INNOCENT--
--WOULD DOOM YOU FOREVER-- TO HELL!
VERILY, I DID NOT NEED TO GUESS, BLACK ONE--
--FOR 'TIS A FACT THOR HATH EVER KNOWN--
NAY, NOT MERE FACT--
--BUT A CODE WHEREBY I LIVE!
SPOOSH!
SO. IT WAS THERE I MADE MY ERROR...
I HOPED TO CORRUPT YOU THROUGH TRICKERY... TO ABASE YOU THROUGH DECEIT.
I FAILED, ASGARDIAN... BUT SO HAVE YOU.' LAVA ALONE CANNOT HARM THE MIGHTY MEPHISTO!
THOU MUST THINK ME A TRUE FOOL, NIGHT-CREATURE.
I DID NOT THROW THEE THERE TO FINISH THEE--
NAY, THE MOMENT FOR THAT IS--

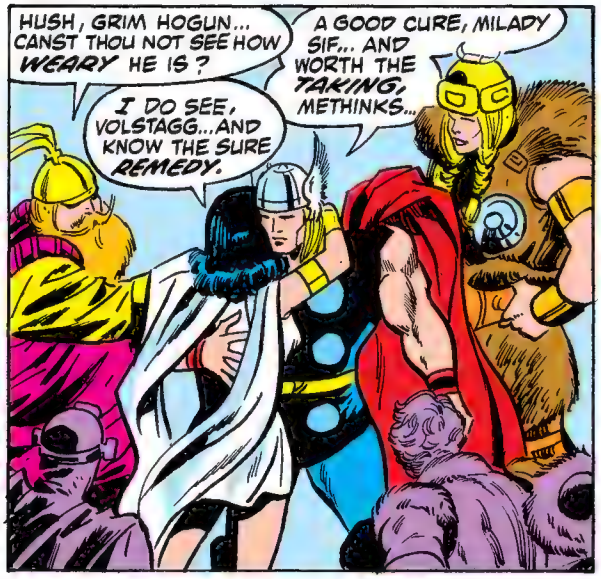
BADOOM!
NOW!


FOR TEN ETERNAL SECONDS, THE SHOWER OF ROCK AND LAVA UNLEASHED BY THE THUNDER GOD'S HAMMER RAINS UPON THE STRUGGLING MEPHISTO--
THE SCREAMS OF GRIM FRUSTRATION GROW GRADUALLY FAINTER AS THE POOL OF BUBBLING LAVA FILLS--

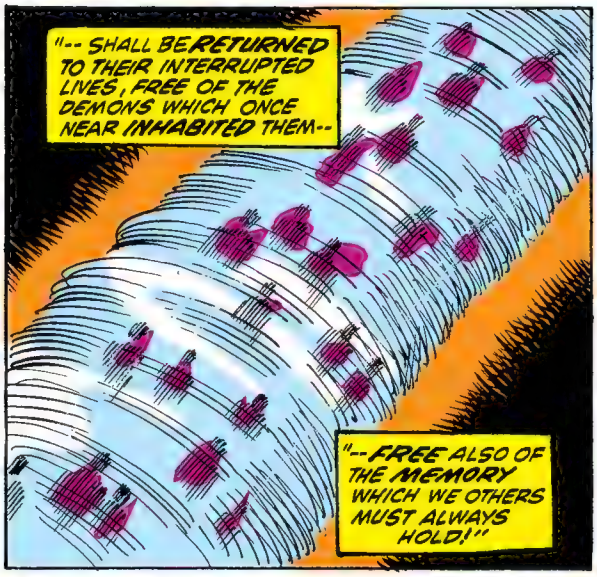

--AND FADE ENTIRELY WHEN THE EARTHEN STORM IS DONE.
SLEEP THEE WELL, MEPHISTO.
FOR A TIME, AT LEAST... EARTH TOO WILL SLEEP, SAFE FROM THY PLUNDERING HAND.

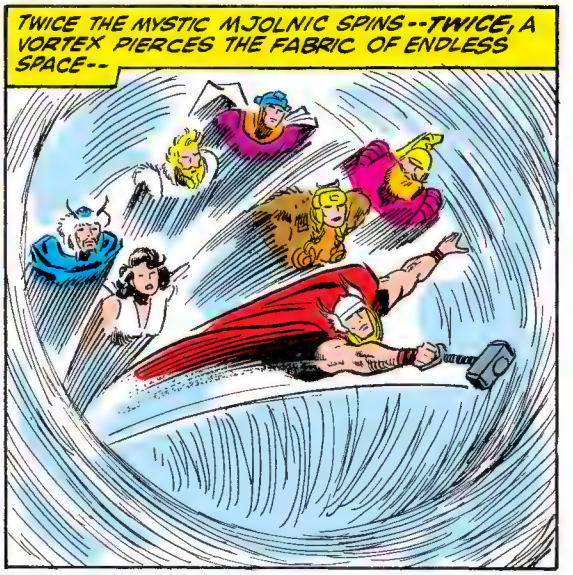

...THOUGH FOR MYSELF, I FEAR... THERE WILL BE MANY RESTLESS NIGHTS...
...FOR FROM THIS DAY, THOR WILL EVER WALK... ALONE.

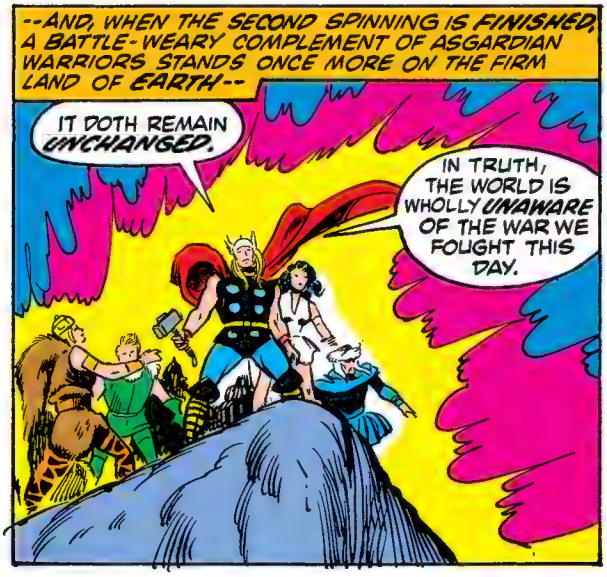

HILDEGARDE SAYS THEE NAY, MILORD!
WHATE'ER SPELL THE DEMON DID USE ON US HAS PASSED WITH HIS PASSING...
...AND IN TRUTH, WE ALL ARE FREE...
...AS FREE AS A MAN OR GOD MAY BE... WITH MEMORIES SUCH AS THESE.


HUSH, GRIM HOGUN... CANST THOU NOT SEE HOW WEARY HE IS?
I DO SEE, VOLSTAGG...AND KNOW THE SURE REMEDY.
A GOOD CURE, MILADY SIF... AND WORTH THE TAKING, METHINKS...

...BUT FIRST, THERE ARE THINGS I MUST NEEDS ATTEND TO..
THESE MEN MEPHISTO DID SPIRIT FROM THEIR NATURAL TIME AND PLACE--


"-- SHALL BE RETURNED TO THEIR INTERRUPTED LIVES, FREE OF THE DEMONS WHICH ONCE NEAR INHABITED THEM--
"--FREE ALSO OF THE MEMORY WHICH WE OTHERS MUST ALWAYS HOLD!"


TWICE THE MYSTIC MJOLNIC SPINS--TWICE, A VORTEX PIERCES THE FABRIC OF ENDLESS SPACE--


--AND, WHEN THE SECOND SPINNING IS FINISHED, A BATTLE-WEARY COMPLEMENT OF ASGARDIAN WARRIORS STANDS ONCE MORE ON THE FIRM LAND OF EARTH--
IT DOTH REMAIN UNCHANGED.
IN TRUTH, THE WORLD IS WHOLLY UNAWARE OF THE WAR WE FOUGHT THIS DAY.

SUCH IS, AS IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN...
...FOR, EACH MAN MUST HAVE HIS DAY WITH THE GOD OF HELL...
...AND ONLY HE CAN EVER KNOW WHETHER IT END IN VICTORY...
...OR IN BLACK DEFEAT!
FINIS
NEXT ISSUE: THE ABSORBING MAN!

The Mighty Thor #195, page 2 original art
by John Buscema & Vince Colletta

THOR
A QUEEN? MILADY, IN BUT A FORTNIGHT--
--I'LL MAKE THEE A ROYAL BRIDE!
BUT HOLD-- WHAT MADNESS STEALS YON FANDRAL'S MIND?
THE MADNESS OF WINE, METHINKS, MILORD.
ENOUGH!
YOU SEEK TO DANCE, WOMAN--?
--THEN KNOW THAT FANDRAL'S FEET--
--THOSE FEET WHICH, IN BATTLE, HAVE BEEN OF AGILE USE--
--ARE FASTER FEET THAN YOURS!
DOST THOU NOT SEE THIS, MILORD THOR?
YEA, DASHING ONE--
--THOR DOST INDEED SEE ALL.
AND SO, METHINKS, DOTH MY FATHER ODIN.
YET... HIS FEATURES ARE SO GRIM ...HIS EYES SO SHADOWED BY UNSEEMLY WORRY.
'TIS NOT MY FATHER'S WAY TO SIT SO DARKLY.
MAYHAP... 'TIS MORE HERE THIS DAY THAN FIRST WOULD MEET A REVELER'S EYE!
2

Courtesy Heritage Auctions

The Mighty Thor #195, page 3 original art
by John Buscema & Vince Colletta

THOR 195 SEPT
3
FATHER, IF THAT LIBERTY I MAY TAKE--
--I WOULD ASK WHAT THING BE WRONG?
YEA, THOU MAYEST ASK, MY SON...
...BUT ODIN MAY NOT SAY. THIS EVE, MY HEART GROWS HEAVY--
--FOR I MUST SEND THEE FROM ASGARD--
--MAYHAP FOR ALL TIME!
MY LORD--WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE SUCH BANISHMENT--?
DONE? THOU ART INNOCENT OF ALL BLAME, MY SON.
SUFFICE IT TO SAY--THOU MUST FOLLOW ODIN'S WISHES--
--AND, AS ALWAYS--FOLLOW THEM WITHOUT QUESTION!
FATHER, IF IN TRUTH THAT BE THY WISH--
--THOR CAN DO NO MORE--THAN BOW TO THAT COMMAND!
YEA, MY WISH IT BE--
--AS ALSO I COMMAND--
--LET THE THREE WHOSE LIVES ARE BOUND WITH THINE--
--ACCOMPANY THEE ON THY FATEFUL QUEST!
A QUEST?
3
CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

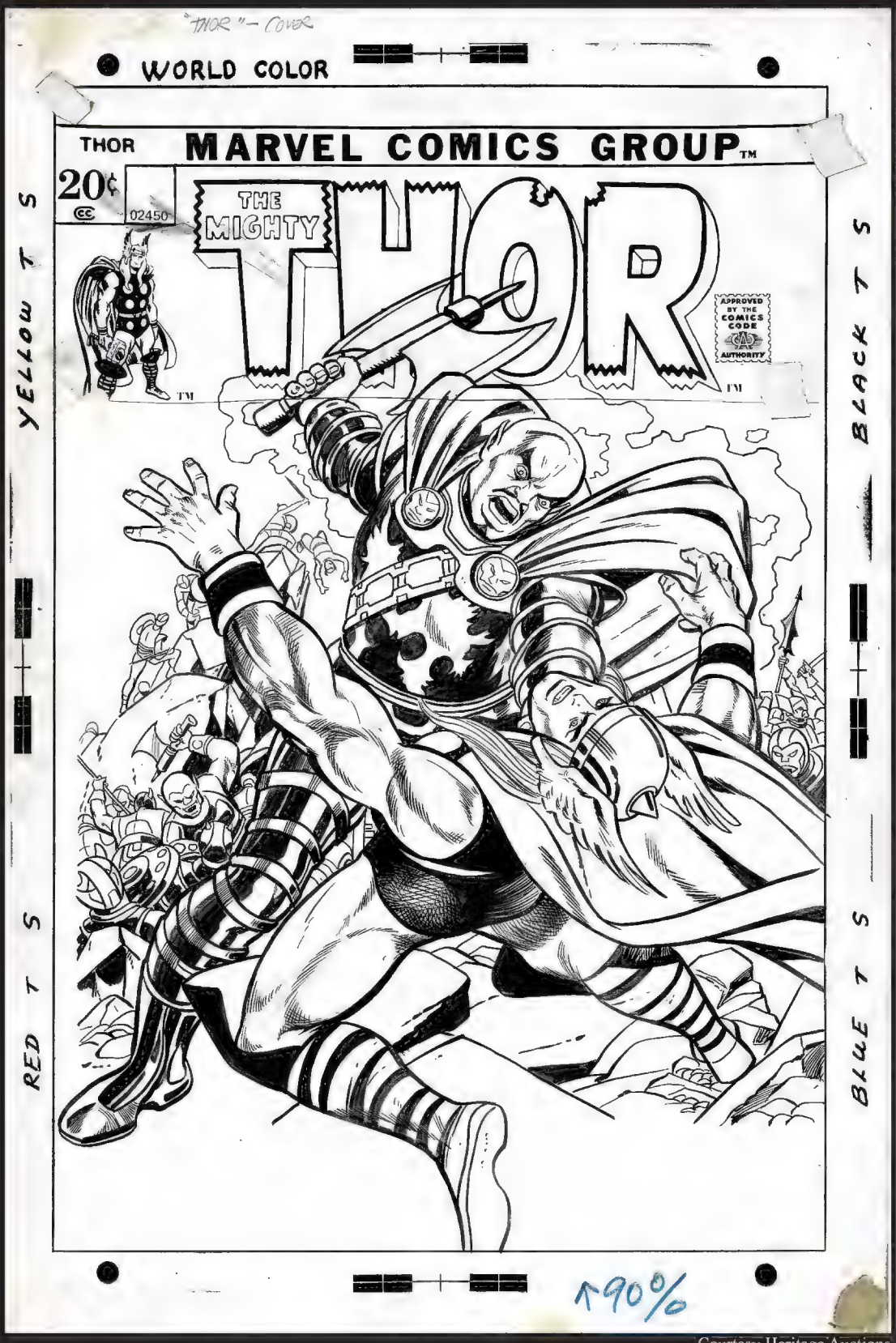
Courtesy Heritage Auctions

The Mighty Thor #198, page 1 original art
by John Buscema & Vince Colletta

THOR #198 DEC. SCHED. VINNIE - DUE 10/15! SHOT
...and odin DIES!
WEAKENED BY THE STRAIN OF TRANSPORTING ASGARD OUT OF NORMAL SPACE, ALL-FATHER ODIN HATH FALLEN PREY TO THE RAMPAGING MANGOG... AND THOR, BUT RECENTLY RETURNED FROM HIS QUEST FOR THE WELL AT WORLD'S END, DOTH TRULY SEEM HELPLESS TO SAVE HIM--
MILORD-- PRITHEE SPEAK! GIVE THY SON A SIGN THAT STILL THOU DOST LIVE!!
MONSTER, HE BE SILENT--AND IF THAT SILENT BETOKENS DEATH--
--NOT ALL THY POWER WILL PROTECT THEE!
WORDS!! MERE FATUOUS WORDS!
MANGOG HATH NO FEAR OF VAGUE PRONOUNCEMENTS! HIS IS THE STRENGTH-- HIS, THE GLORY!
STAN LEE, EDITOR/GERRY CONWAY, SCRIPTER/JOHN BUSCEMA, ARTIST/VINCE COLLETTA, INKER/JON COSTA, LETTERER

Courtesy Heritage Auctions

The Mighty Thor #201 cover original art
by Gil Kane & Vince Colletta



Courtesy Heritage Auctions

BIOGRAPHIES

GERRY CONWAY

In 1969, sixteen-year-old Gerry Conway was a teenager peddling short stories to DC and Marvel for their horror anthology books, and by 1976, Conway had worked his way up to the position of Marvel's Editor-in-Chief. In between, he logged a mindbogglingly prolific schedule as writer for both companies; for purposes of brevity, it might be easier to list the titles he did not write!

After establishing a pedigree with those *House of Secrets* and *Tower of Shadows* short stories, Gerry quickly latched on to a regular gig as writer of *Daredevil, Sub-Mariner, Iron Man,* and both entries in the *Amazing Adventures* anthology (Black Widow and the Inhumans.) He also began long associations with *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Thor,* picking up with the flagship Spider-Man title after Roy Thomas had left to begin his own stint as Marvel EIC, and taking the baton on *Thor* from none other than Stan Lee. He scripted both books for nearly fifty issues each, and in the process wrote some memorable tales, including one of the all-time classic Spider-Man stories, "The Death of Gwen Stacy." Cueing off his early interest in horror stories, Gerry took advantage of Marvel's burgeoning line of horror comics, co-creating *Werewolf By Night* and *Man-Thing,* as well as writing the first issue of the long-running *Tomb of Dracula.*

In 1976, he was handed the top job at Marvel, which he held for much of the year before transitioning to DC Comics. One of his first big assignments was writing the script for one of the first inter-company crossovers, *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man.* Shortly thereafter, he began a long tenure on prime DC titles like *Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes, World's Finest* and *Wonder Woman.* He also co-created Firestorm with Al Milgrom in 1978, scribing all five issues of the short-lived '70s incarnation.

As the '80s dawned, he started a long run writing both key Batman titles, *Detective Comics* and *Batman,* and continued his long-term run on *Justice League of America,* a stint that began in earnest in 1978 and would end with the dismantling of the fabled JLA Detroit in 1986. During this era, he also revived Firestorm with artist Pat Broderick; this time the title found traction and Conway wrote the first 53 issues consecutively. A return to Marvel in the late '80s saw Conway tackling two of the three extant Spider-Man titles: *Spectacular Spider-Man* and *Web of Spider-Man.*

During this period of time, Conway was slowly asserting himself as a writer in film and television. His early '80s screenplay collaborations with Roy Thomas resulted in the animated film *Fire and Ice* and barbarian sequel *Conan the Destroyer.* By the late '80s, his opportunities in television writing had exploded, and he left comics to pursue his new vocation, writing for shows like *Matlock, Father Dowling Mysteries, Diagnosis: Murder* and *Law & Order.* His last work in comics was in 1993, writing the Topps Kirbyverse one-shot *Night Glider.*

Currently, Conway is still active in writing and producing for television, and resides in California with his wife and their child.

JOHN BUSCEMA

Though known primarily for his long tenure as one of Marvel Comics' most prolific pencilers, John Buscema began his celebrated career at the age of twenty-one with Timely Comics. After Timely closed up its in-house bullpen and sent most freelancers chasing down new art assignments, John pursued comics work for a time before he bagged the comics scene altogether and went to work in advertising in 1958.

When he finally returned to comics, however, he did so with a vengeance. Stan Lee recruited him away from the field of advertising and quickly ensconced him into the upper ranks of Marvel artists. Picking up where *Avengers* mainstay Don Heck left off, "Big John" settled into a long run of his own, showcasing the exploits of Earth's Mightiest Heroes. The much-anticipated *Silver Surfer* series was launched with John at the helm, and top-shelf books like *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* were entrusted to his care after Jack Kirby left Marvel for DC Comics.

John's bold, muscular artwork commanded the comic book page with realistic figurework that represented the next evolutionary step in post-Kirby Marvel Comics style. The respect accorded him within Marvel as an artist's artist was of such renown that he literally wrote the book on it, composing *How To Draw the Marvel Way*, the classic "how to" book in comic-book illustration.

He worked from the '70s through the '90s on nearly every title in the Marvel stable, including his personal favorite title *Conan the Barbarian* with Roy Thomas, providing steady work throughout his career. He retired from regular work in 1996, but returned every now and then to the comics scene until he passed away after a battle with cancer in 2002.

STAN LEE

Stanley Lieber was born in New York City in 1922, the oldest son of Jewish immigrants from Romania. Upon an early graduation from high school, Stan was thrust out into the post-Depression wartime economy. Through family connections, he was able to land a job with Martin Goodman's comic-book publishing

start-up, Timely Comics, as an assistant editor. His youthful aspiration was to one day write the "Great American Novel," so when his first professional writing job came, in the form of a humble two-page text story in *Captain America Comics* #3, he adopted a pseudonym: Stan Lee. This way, he could reserve his real name for that novel-to-be.

But the world of comics managed to keep Stan Lee constantly employed. His proficiency on the job got him the position of managing editor at an extremely young age. He graduated from simple text pieces to full-length stories in *All-Winners*, *USA Comics*, and other Timely anthologies. His tenure in the '50s saw him expand the company (now called Atlas Comics) output to include more genre experimentation, with westerns, war, horror and crime comics.

All this activity was a prelude to the Marvel Age of Comics, ushered in under the auspices of Stan Lee and a small stable of artists topped off by the formidable talents of Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. Responding to Martin Goodman's challenge to do something to find a way to revitalize dwindling sales, Stan figured he would co-opt the successful super-hero revival at competitor DC Comics and add his own magic to the mix: Instead of being perfect invulnerable champions, Stan's Marvel Age heroes would be normal, fallible, imperfect people, forced to cope with their newfound superhuman traits just like the average person might.

Stan's innovation sent shock waves through the comics industry, and within a few years, Marvelmania was taking hold: unlike other fads of the time, it wasn't letting go. Under his direction, creations like Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, Iron Man, Thor, Doctor Strange and Incredible Hulk flourished in the shared universe they inhabited. Stan developed the idea that these larger-than-life heroes would meet each other in crossovers from title to title, thus exploding the story possibilities for the kids who became eager fans.

In addition to bringing a new twist to the life of the super hero, Stan also brought the reader inside Marvel's "Batty Bullpen," creating a sense of camaraderie and special membership. His friendly and enthusiastic banter in letters pages, house ads, and Bullpen Bulletins brought Marvel Comics to a level of familiarity with their fans that had kids and college students proudly professing themselves to be "True Believers."

At one time, Stan wrote virtually every comic that appeared from Marvel during the 1960s. But when he was promoted to Publisher in 1971, his writing had to take a backseat, and by the mid-'70s, he semi-retired from scripting duties. Over the years, Stan has returned to write scripts for the odd single issue or series, focusing on Marvel's ventures into television and movie development. To this day, he remains Marvel Comics' single greatest ambassador to the world.

JIM MOONEY

A prolific artist on the comics scene since the 1940s, Jim Mooney proved to be a very gifted draftsman, nimble enough at both penciling and inking that he gained a reputation for both disciplines that kept him in constant employ for decades. Tabbed by his peers with the nickname "Gentleman" Jim for his positive and polite demeanor, he became an artist revered by fans of both DC and Marvel Comics.

Just after the dawning days of comics' Golden Age, Jim broke into the business working under the tutelage of such luminaries as Will Eisner, Lou Fine and Nick Cardy. He would grow to find his artistic voice alongside peers like George Tuska and Ruben Moreira, freelancing for many of the era's most prominent publishers—including Timely, where he met a young Stan Lee and hit it off with the young staff writer/editor.

As the decade progressed, his work at DC took prominence. Jim was crafting stories of the Dynamic Duo in both *Batman* and *Detective Comics*, plus Robin stories in *Star-Spangled Comics*. He also drew many of the seminal adventures of Tommy Tomorrow in *Action Comics*. It was while drawing Supergirl in the pages of *Action Comics*, however, that Jim crafted an enduring legacy with his clean, illustrative take on Superman's cousin.

Jim worked at DC until 1968, when his bold, streamlined style was called upon to team with John Romita on *Amazing Spider-Man*. It would be the beginning of a relationship with the Webslinger that would lead to almost two decades of memorable penciling and inking of the character, including *Peter Parker, Marvel Team-Up* and the flagship title. His enthusiasm for work at Marvel also led to work outside of Spider-Man, with highlights including his run on *Ghost Rider* and *Man-Thing* and *Omega the Unknown* with Steve Gerber, but Jim lent his hand to virtually every title Marvel produced in one way or another.

In 2008, Jim passed away at the age of 89 after an extended illness.

Biographical material researched and written by John Rhett Thomas

THE MARVEL MASTERWORKS LIBRARY

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THE UNCANNY X-MEN VOLS. 1-8

THE MARVEL AGE

It was August 1961 and change was hitting the newsstands. *Fantastic Four* #1 did not feature the squeaky-clean heroes of yesteryear. These were real characters placed in extraordinary circumstances. They lived together, they fought among themselves—and sometimes, they even lost to the bad guys. This was more than a change in attitude: It was the beginning of something entirely different—the Marvel Age of Comics!

Thanks to the fertile imaginations of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, an unending list of heroes followed the FF with ever-increasing acclaim and popularity: the Amazing Spider-Man, the Mighty Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Iron Man and the X-Men, to name but a few. These were the Marvel heroes, born of conflict and a continuous struggle to balance human lives with superhuman responsibilities.

The *Marvel Masterworks* series was created to give comic-book readers everywhere the chance to experience the greatest comics the world has known as they were originally presented.

THE GOLDEN AGE

As the Great Depression wore on and the specter of war hung over the heads of all Americans, a new entertaining escape from the newspapers' horrifying realities was born: the comic book. Within their four-color pages, larger-than-life super heroes could make short work of America's foes, giving readers of all ages hope for victory against the real-life enemies that faced the United States.

At the forefront of this new medium was Timely Comics, a young company staffed by such legendary talents as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. These skilled writers and artists created a vast array of characters that would give rise to the Marvel Universe!

GOLDEN AGE ALL-WINNERS VOLS. 1-4
GOLDEN AGE CAPTAIN AMERICA VOLS. 1-5
GOLDEN AGE DARING MYSTERY VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE HUMAN TORCH VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE MARVEL COMICS VOLS. 1-6
GOLDEN AGE MYSTIC COMICS VOL. 1
GOLDEN AGE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE U.S.A. COMICS VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE YOUNG ALLIES VOLS. 1-2

THE ATLAS ERA

Seeing super heroes waning, Timely Comics evolved into Atlas Comics and took on a vast new range of genres: science-fiction tales of outer space adventures and unimaginable monsters; realistic war comics; buxom jungle heroines; horror comics that would become the center of a moral panic that rocked the industry; and romance comics for the emerging teen audience. Even the classic costumed heroes of the '40s retooled to take on the threat of Communism. From Western gunfighters to crime to horror, Atlas had it all!

ATLAS ERA BATTLEFIELD VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA BLACK KNIGHT/YELLOW CLAW VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA HEROES VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY VOLS. 1-3
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ATLAS ERA TALES OF SUSPENSE VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA VENUS VOL. 1

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